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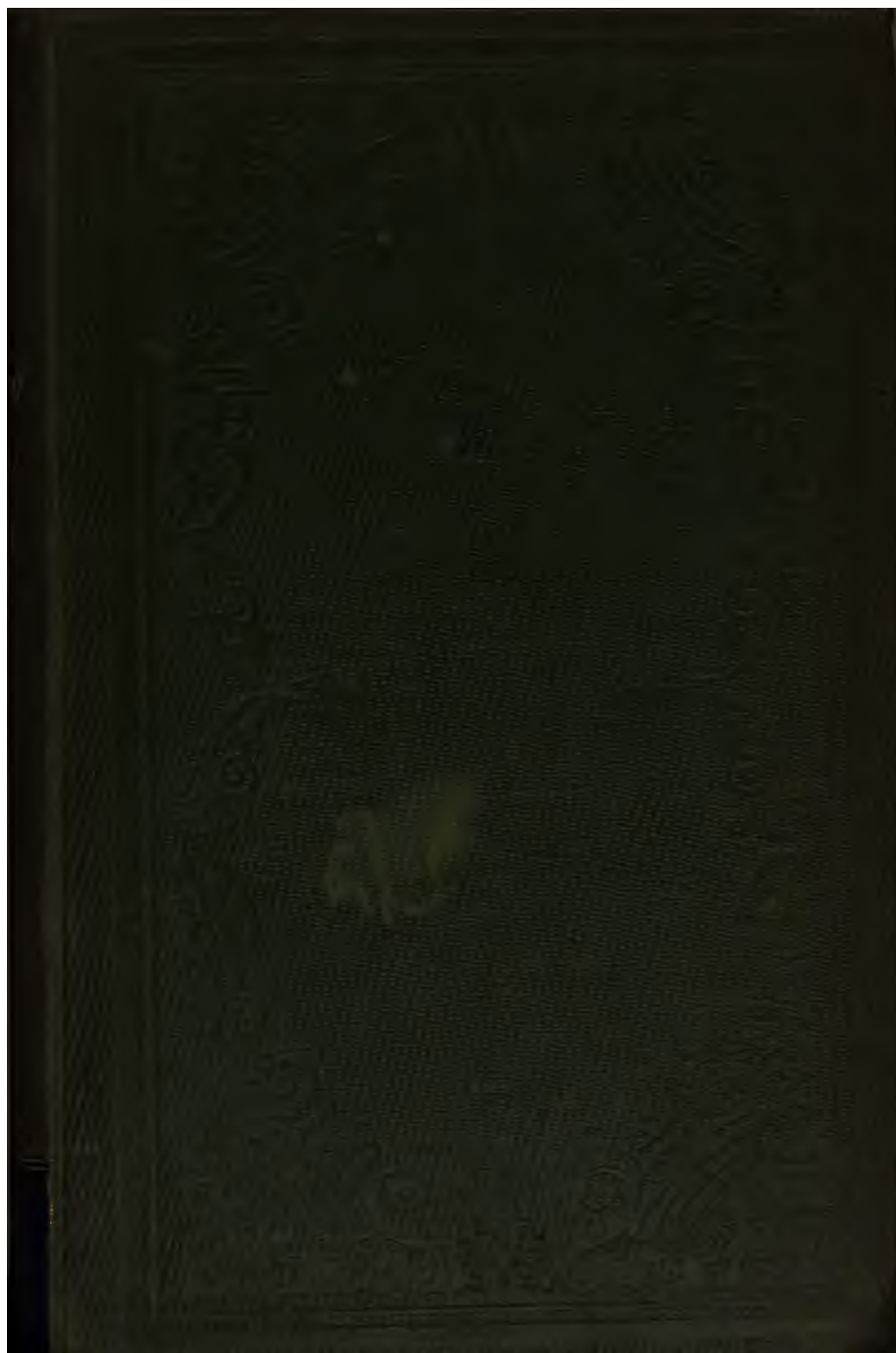
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IN ONE VOL., FOOLSCAP OCTAVO, PRICE 4s., CLOTH,

GLAD TIDINGS.

—o—

FROM "THE TIMES," NOV. 7TH.

When we say that the scene on which the actors in this little story move is laid at Athens, that the date of the action is the year 65 A.D., and that the chief personage in it is St. Paul, assisted by "Dionysius the Areopagite," and "a woman named Damaris," our readers will have no difficulty in guessing that this is a religious story, and that the "glad tidings" here announced relate to the preaching of the Apostle to the Gentiles on Mars' Hill. The question arises, why tell a story about a truth? Why embody in a work of fiction scenes so sacred as those described in the Acts of the Apostles? The answer is that there have been Tales before this in which characters more sacred than that of St. Paul have been brought upon the stage of fiction, and in which religious subjects have been handled with a freedom—nay, with a licence—of which there is not a trace in this little book. This is a religious book on a sacred subject, and its sole intention is to edify the Christian reader by imaginary examples of the faith and constancy which enabled the converts of the early ages to triumph over death itself.

But now another question arises—Is the subject well treated? Is it, so far as so slight a story can be, a work of art? We think it is. The plot is simple enough. Damaris mourns for Callias, her absent lover, and finds no comfort in prayers to any of the gods. There is a shipwreck off the Piræus, and in that ship are St. Paul and Callias, the author supposing, as we infer, that this was one of the occasions unrecorded in the Acts, but indicated in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, in which the Apostle to the Gentiles endured the dangers of the deep. St. Paul saves the life of Callias after he has sustained the spirits of all on board by his faith; but the shipwrecked mariners noise the city; then follows the scene on Mars' Hill, the apostle's denunciation of the heathen and their idolatrous worship, and the meeting of Damaris. At the end of the story she had been introduced for she is the true G. The story is told again, she promises to be again, Damaris, the Apostle

"and he for whom thou would'st pray is named Callias; give me thy hand, and I will lead thee to him." Callias, of course, recovers, and thus the story goes on, the Apostle making converts among the seniors of the city, and among others Dionysius the Areopagite, besides especially instructing the youthful pair in Christian truth, and advising Damaris to lay aside her gay attire and plaiting of the hair, and to put on a garb becoming to a Christian woman. ☞

On one occasion, when Damaris has been chosen to fill the chief place among the maidens of the city in the Pan-Athenaic procession, a tumult arises, because Damaris, chosen against her will, appears in homely dress, and refuses to take part in the idolatrous ceremony. The house in which the Apostle and his converts are living is surrounded by a mob, who accuse him of having obtained an influence over their minds by magic, and everything looks like Socrates and hemlock, if not a speedier death, when the Apostle exerts the magic of his Roman citizenship, and the mob slink off, awed by the presence of a few Roman legionaries.

So things progress, and Callias and Damaris, the Christian pair, might have been united by Christian rites, instead of heathen ceremonies; but that the course of true love should run smooth is not to be expected, least of all in a religious tale, and so Callias is assassinated by Alexander the Coppersmith—of whom, we may remark, from the Second Epistle to Timothy, that we should rather have expected to find him at Ephesus than at Athens—but who, wherever he abode, seems, like Demetrius of Ephesus, to have driven a good trade in shrines, and who had just lost an order through the interference of the young Christian.

The loss of Callias is naturally a great blow to Damaris, but Christianity and the Apostle enable her to bear up under her affliction. And now the story hastens to a close. Alexander is tried solemnly for the murder and escapes, inasmuch as he had slain an enemy of the gods. The Apostle's work is over in Athens, and, after a solemn warning to the idolatrous authorities, he shakes off the dust of Athens from his feet, and departs for Asia with his convert Damaris, whom her friends vainly endeavour to divert from her purpose.

The little Tale is good in tone and keeping, and a few inconsistencies which it presents to the deeply read classical scholar are not such as to spoil its effect on the general public. If it should edify any among the careless herd of "babbler" in this generation "who spend their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing," we imagine that the purpose of the author will be amply fulfilled.



ONE TRIAL.

A NOVEL.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

By H. R. C.

VOL II.

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1860.

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and his betrothed, walked quickly up and down arm in arm.

She looked calm, but so pale! all that morning had been devoted to seeing her old people: and she paid a visit to poor Janet, who wept abundantly, and prophesied that the great earl was taking her away never to return.

More or less, her occupations on that day had been sad ones. Tears, not smiles, were showered on the young bride.

She had come into luncheon, tired and dispirited. Lord Egmont watched her, said nothing, but quietly placed a glass of wine and a biscuit near her, and by answering those who addressed her, enabled her to remain quiet and undisturbed.

He asked her in the course of the afternoon, to take one turn with him on the terrace, and she gladly acquiesced. She seemed always cheered and supported by his presence, and was beginning to turn to him for help and advice, as she had never done to any before.

They were both, however, this afternoon, unusually silent.

The sun was sinking in a gorgeous bed of red and gold, flushing the sky and the ocean, and mellowing the beauty of the many tinted leaves clothing the hills.

"When that sun rises again, Ethel, we shall be on the threshold of a new (and God grant it) a happy life. Every day I feel more and more grateful to you for shedding such joy on my existence. It is not too much to say that my fondest earthly wish is to make you the most enviable of your sex. My whole endeavour will be to cheer, guard, and protect you from all that can hurt or vex; as far as human care can avert evil, trial shall long be warded off. I have that confidence in my love for you, and in my earnestness to be your help and comfort in this life!"

"Dear, kind Lord Egmont," said Ethel softly, "I am indeed sensible of your love and goodness; oh, that I felt more worthy of such affection, could make you a better return for it. I do hope earnestly that I may reward you somewhat for so great a love."

Lord Egmont said nothing, if looks could, confirm his words, they did! the overweening pride and tenderness with which he watched his bride!

"One thing more, Ethel mine, before we go in; this is our last walk as betrothed; our next will be when united for ever. I would wish to make one compact, let there be no concealments between us; let us rest entirely in each other's confidence. Our perplexities, our joys, let them find a response one in the other. *I* promise you this; do you promise me, Ethel, or is it too much to ask?"

"No, no; hardly too much," hurriedly rejoined Ethel, "I think there can hardly be a subject on which a wife would not thankfully consult her husband."

"Ah! that is not enough; it is not the mere consulting I mean; there are many things on which I would not trouble you. I no not mean these. It is the mutual confidence, the blind confidence I would wish to establish. But I fear I ask too much, Ethel. Never mind, I give my pledge,

and will trust to time to show you I am worthy of yours."

"Good, kind, generous man!" thought Ethel; "why not now tell him all?" She looked up affectionately at him. "Why should she embitter his present feelings by a discovery of her unhappy past? No, all that should rest. William's deceit had made enough misery; the confidence he asked was not for the past, but for the future. She hoped, she believed, she could promise this."

(Ah! Ethel, you forgot then that you were in reality deceiving that man, so worthy of entire trust and devoted confidence and love! That bane, your pride, was clogging your better nature, and prompting you to an act of which some day you would see the injustice and the sin.)

Cresswell now came on the Terrace to tell his mistress that Lady Jane, with Mr. and Mrs. Clare, had arrived.

Ethel gave Lord Egmont one look of gratitude and affection, and returned to the house.

There were her friends gathered round a

cheerful fire, lit in consideration of Mrs. Marsdon and the travellers. They one and all surrounded Ethel with cheerful voices and many congratulations.

Pretty Henrietta looked still prettier; her husband the picture of happiness.

"Miss Vane, how can I thank you enough for my room in Eccleston Street. When we drove home, and the man mysteriously showed me into the study, I was quite transfixed. Henrietta and I have never sat in any other apartment since. If ever I read, it will be owing to you; those beautiful books and that arm chair! How kind and thoughtful of you."

"Arthur will sit nowhere else, I assure you, Ethel," chimed in his wife; "and has had my work-table put on one side of the fire-place, that we may use it as our morning room."

Ethel looked pleased, and for the moment animated and happy.

"And now we've come to your wedding, I can hardly believe it, Miss Vane," said Arthur. "I wish you all happiness, and," added he in a

low voice, and seriously, "if any man was ever worthy of a lovely, peerless bride, it is Egmont. I know no one like him; I have heard a good deal about him since we met last, and the more I hear, the more I revere, and almost love him!"

Ethel looked pleased and grateful. To Arthur, however, she appeared too calm, too cold: he turned away, half disappointed.

The Fairfax's arrived; that is to say, Sir Henry, his meek wife, and fiery daughters. The delectable Jemmy had been unavoidably called abroad at this time; so they said, but no one believed it. Beyond the sight of the heliotrope bouquet, Ethel had observed no farther advances towards her, or at least cared so little about the matter, as to pay no heed to his feeble attentions.

An uncle and aunt of Lord Egmont's now arrived, and one or two of his bachelor friends, on whom the two Misses Fairfax cast looks of determination. They seemed pleased to see two such pretty bridesmaids, and were on the most satisfactory footing in a very short time.

Lord Egmont proudly led his uncle and aunt up to his bride, whose grace, beauty, and sweet manners at once captivated them.

Mr. Thelluson took his nephew by the arm, and drew him into a bay window, leaving his wife with Ethel.

"You have indeed won a prize, Henry. What a lovely creature! Of course it is no good to ask you, but is she as good as she is beautiful?"

Lord Egmont smiled; his looks expressed proud confidence.

"You shall see for yourself some day, my dear uncle; in the mean time, try and believe the best of her."

Mr. Thelluson was satisfied; he doated on his nephew, and was inclined to regard Ethel with a jealous and criticising eye, fearing she might not be worthy of him. He turned to where she stood, and where Lord Egmont had joined her.

Their tall, graceful figures, and high-bred looks, made them a striking pair. He was

bending over her, and whispering his entreaty she would go to her room and rest before dinner. She looked up at him gratefully, and the good uncle, in his admiration of her beauty, might be excused in overlooking the fact that it was gratitude, not love, that shone from her eyes.

Sir Henry was in his glory, going over with his friend, the steward, the ground prepared for the next day's festivities, to see the marquees erected for the village dinner, the preparations for the games and amusements. The pig even, that was to be climbed for by the boys, and the handsome horse, to be shot for by the farmers on the estate. Ethel had forgotten no one. The old people were to have a dinner prepared for them in the house; each female guest had been provided with a dainty bonnet and plain dress for the great day; and each male with a neat suit of country clothing. The tailors and dress-makers had been busy for weeks. All was bustle out of doors; all was excitement within. Cresswell, and his ally the housekeeper, were welcoming Mr. Simpson, and old Mrs. Scott, of

Egmont, who had come over express to see their dear young lord married.

Poor Cresswell was melancholy ! Much as he considered his pride flattered by the alliance of the two houses, yet he should lose his dear young mistress !

One room in the house was a mass of white ribbons. Since dawn that morning three maids had been busy mingling orange blossoms and myrtle, and silver leaves and acorns.

Ethel at last went to her boudoir tired and worn.

In all this hurry she seemed like a dull fragment of stone. When she thought of her future husband, it was with a sense of deep injustice towards him ; she could not return the love he so lavishly bestowed on her, and he was marrying her, believing that her heart was not wholly his, yet not for an instant imagining that it was another's.

The buoyancy of her spirits, where was it now ? the keen sense of enjoyment of life, whither had it fled ? Her mind and body alike wearied,

she sank back on her chair. The sounds in the house became fainter and fainter, the hammering without ceased ; in a few moments she was asleep ; her head supported on one hand, the other hanging listlessly by her side.

A tap at the door ; quite gently another, and hearing no reply, and supposing the room untenanted, Lord Egmont entered with a case in his hand.

He thought Ethel might be in her room, and was anxious to put this case on her table in the boudoir.

He caught sight of her in her low chair. He saw she slept ; he stopped for a moment to look at her—on that pale and worn face, which, now no expression lit it up, looked wan and ghastly ; he paused, half scared to see the lines of anxiety and the expression of distress, which leave their mark unmistakeably on a face when the spirit is resting, and for the time not striving to give a false interpretation to its inner self. Her eyebrows were knit, the mouth compressed, and the whole face breathing a sort of despair.

By the light of a small lamp Lord Egmont looked at her fixedly.

"How ill she looks! how tired! my poor darling, my Ethel," murmured he, "what will I not do to smooth your path for you? what not sacrifice? may heaven give me grace to help you."

And he clasped his hands, and gazed down at her lovingly and tenderly.

At that instant a smile broke over those pallid features; the brow unbent, the mouth relaxed, and he heard her murmur: "Good, kind Egmont."

He stole from the room, having first taken up a pen, written on a card, and left it on the case.

Ethel still slept on, a peaceful, happy sleep; when she awoke it was with a feeling of refreshment. The first thing she saw was the jewel case; on a card which lay on it, was written, "For my Ethel."

She unfastened the velvet casket, there reposed on their satin beds, two suites of jewels,

which had been re-set for her. One bandeau of brilliants he had mentioned to her, begging her to wear it on her wedding day. His mother had been married in it, and he longed to see it on his own bride.

Two bracelets she then examined; on one clasp was the likeness of "dear Aunty," done by that good lady's connivance, and kept a profound secret from the petted niece. In the other was a picture of Lord Egmont. The calm dignified expression, and the gaze of tenderness which seemed to dwell on her from the ivory, reminded her forcibly of him soon to be her husband.

"It were hard if I could not love you," she said, as she held the miniature in her hand.

Simpson came in to summon her to her toilette, and fastening the case, but retaining the two bracelets, she left the room.

In the meantime Arthur had, with the privilege of his new condition, installed himself in an easy chair by his wife's fire. She sat on a stool at his feet, and dismissed the maid, who

was disgusted at having to leave the finery at six and seven.

"That's why I hate to be maid to a married lady," grumbled she. "She is sure to have her husband about, interfering and giving his opinion on her hair or her dress, and thinking you're dawdling if we take a decent time for dressing."

"Now, Henrietta, answer me one question candidly, as a subordinate to a superior."

Henrietta smiled derisively at this grand beginning.

"Is Ethel Vane happy, or is she not? I will not prejudice your mind by giving my opinion; I simply ask you to tell me yours?"

"Why, what should prevent her being happy?"

"That is not the point. Happy or not happy? Keep to the question, if you please."

"Well, then, I say yes—decidedly yes! How is it possible to be otherwise? That charming Lord Egmont! that beautiful place!"

"Stay!" cried this lord of creation, "that is

so like a woman—giving reasons why a thing should be, all the time knowing it is not.”

“Then you do not think she is happy, Arthur? Poor Ethel!”

“No! decidedly no! As to riches and title, Ethel has a soul above being flattered by them. I want to know why she is so pale and thin? why so depressed in spirits? And where, too, is that laugh—that silvery laugh which sounded so musically in these old oak galleries?”

“Mercy! how poetical you are, Arthur, to-night. But seriously now, how can you expect any one to have anything but a pale face and a serious air the day before her wedding?”

“Then, Henrietta,” returned her husband, with a solemn air, “you were a brilliant exception, for on the eve of my execution I never saw you look jollier?”

“That’s a libel! I never yet heard or wish to hear of any girl looking jolly on such occasions. Think of her separation from her family—her farewell to all her old friends and old haunts.”

"Ah, all very fine! but three fourths are very glad to have got a husband, notwithstanding the old friends and the old haunts. They're not so easily had, let me tell you, Mrs. Henrietta."

And Arthur, with a mocking smile, drew his collars up, and settled his moustache in a graceful curve.

"Many thanks, I am sure, for the honour you have done me, my lord and master," gaily responded the pretty wife, as she rose from her seat to make him a low curtsy; "but now seriously, tell me what you mean about dear Ethel?"

"Well, then, seriously; her heart is not in this marriage. Depend on it, my dear, she was in love with that handsome young fellow, Dillon, and she can't forget him!"

"Nonsense, Arthur! don't be so gloomy; it was nothing but an idle flirtation, and Ethel must have known all the time of his engagement."

"As to idle flirtation, I don't believe Miss

Vane has it in her. No! this Dillon was and is the only one she loves. Don't tell me a girl could alter so in a few months. So beautiful as she is, the character of that beauty is altered; she reminds me more now of that statue we saw at Lord R.'s of Regret. That pensive, downward look; that sad gaze resting on the withered flowers in the hand."

"Really, Arthur, I do not know you to-day!"

And indeed Arthur was very pensive and unlike himself as he looked dreamingly into the fire.

"Let us hope, however," rejoined he, rousing himself, "that she will forget all the past. Now don't say a word to your mother, Henrietta. I am half afraid you will when you get over that revealer of many a cherished secret—a sociable cup of tea."

"No, no, I will not, I promise you. And now, dear, do go! There is the first dressing bell, and remember you have no hair to arrange."

is good is dead within me! Oh! for the help, the comfort of a mother! Alas! and alas!"

And for the first time since that dreadful night in Grosvenor Square, the tears gushed from her eyes, and deluged her cheeks.

As the touch of a soft, cool hand on the heated forehead of fever, were these tears to Ethel's dried and withered heart.

Oh! the luxury of those tears as they rose and fell abundantly. The chair on which she had hidden her face, kneeling by its side, shook with her sobs.

At last her spirit rose in prayer to the great and good One. Long she murmured broken sentences of repentance and prayer for forgiveness. Humbly she prayed for help and grace in the new lot on which she was entering. Fervently she entreated for God's blessing on him to whom she was to pledge herself on the morrow; and lastly, that He who could forgive so much, would give her the power to do so towards one whom she felt had cast a deep shadow on her life.

Strengthened, supported, soothed, she went to her room; when she sought her bed, sleep, gentle and undisturbed as that of an infant's, wrapped her in forgetfulness.

When she awoke, it was to hear the merry bells pealing, and to see the glad, bright sun rising in the pure and lofty heavens.

The house was speedily astir; Simpson came in, and found her mistress leaning by the window, watching the outward scene.

She brought in a cup of coffee on a beautiful white china tray, a small *déjeuner* set, the joint gift of her old servants.

Ethel, with tears in her eyes, received this simple token of their attachment, and in a faltering voice told Simpson how she should value this souvenir.

Aunt now stole in tremblingly. Visions of her own marriage day were floating in her mind, the distress, the excitement, the hurry of it

She was half afraid to look at her precious niece, fearing her fortitude would give way, but Ethel went up to her, kissed her, and spoke in

so cheerful a tone, that it relieved Aunty intensely.

"I am ready dressed, you see, darling, that I may sit with you, and not lose sight of you until you are the Countess of Egmont!"

"Dear Aunty! rest here in this chair, and look at all the villagers out there, and I will go on with my preparations."

First, she went to her writing table, and finished calmly the letters she wished to sign with her maiden name.

Then arrived Simpson, with her wedding dress, the white veil hanging in rich folds over her arm.

By this time it was nearly ten o'clock.

Her father's old friend, Sir Henry Fairfax, was to give her away, and a message came from him to hope Miss Vane would be ready in half-an-hour.

Ready, and dressed, she stole into her boudoir, and now alone, she knelt once more before her mother's picture, to crave as it were a maternal blessing on this day. Again, too, she prayed to

her Heavenly Father, and then, composed, but pale, she rose to leave the room in which she had seen so many happy, peaceful days.

She looked around; took in at a glance all the familiar objects, the pictures, the instruments, and the little gifts she had carefully preserved from childhood. She sighed and turned.

There was Lord Egmont, looking at her with such love and pride!

"Fear not, my Ethel, to go forth with me into life. I think you may trust me; and if she," turning to her mother's picture, "were here, I could as conscientiously say to her, trust me with your child."

"I do trust you, indeed I do," faltered Ethel, voluntarily she leant her young head, glittering with its bridal wreath of diamonds, on the breast of her future husband; he placed his hand on it, as it rested there, as he would on that of a helpless child, and inwardly he vowed to cherish and support her through life's thorny scenes.

The carriage was at the door. Ethel's old

coachman driving, with a new livery, and an enormous bouquet.

The rest of the bridal party had left for the church.

The servants were drawn up in two rows, to see their beloved mistress depart for the last time as Miss Vane. She passed slowly between them, giving kind glances for the tearful ones she met on each side. She and Aunty came down together, Sir Henry awaiting them at the door.

She wore no ornament but the beautiful bandeau of Lord Egmont's. The veil depended from this, and swept in graceful folds to the ground; her head looked like that of a statue, and almost as colourless; but still the expression of hope and confidence on her countenance nearly satisfied all who loved and looked on her now.

The church was crowded; not a soul who lived within reasonable distance but was there, in their best attire; the school children strewed flowers in the bride's path, looking at her with wondering eyes the while.

And now she stood before the altar, within the rails of which was her old friend, Doctor Malvern. Lord Egmont took his place by her side, and the service began.

The old Rector's voice faltered out the first few sentences, but the sight of the bride reassured him; she looked happier, better, than he had seen her for months. Once only she raised her eyes to her bridegroom, and then with an expression of trust and affection not lost on her old friend.

A pause, and Ethel and her husband rose from their knees, and Aunt tearfully and voicelessly claimed the first kiss.

A delicate colour had risen to our heroine's cheek, and she received the congratulations of her friends with gentle, modest grace.

Her husband took her hand and led her to the door. Once outside the sacred edifice, such a shout arose! The old church yard was alive with joyful voices; the trees which surrounded it crowded with spectators, who could get no standing room elsewhere, all determined to have

a sight of the beautiful bride and her lordly husband.

For a moment they paused on the steps leading from the building to the path through the church yard. Lord Egmont stepped back a pace, that she, and she alone, their beloved young mistress, should receive the greetings of her friends, amongst whom she had grown up, and been cherished from her earliest years.

Many a one there said she was more like an angel than a human being, as she stood in her pure bridal dress, with the autumn sun shining on her, and playing with the diamonds which were set on her head as a crown.

The sight was talked of for many a day; all acknowledged, too, that the bridegroom, handsome and distinguished, was worthy of her, and his old servants and tenants, who had come over for the occasion, had not failed to let Miss Vane's people know that never was so good a master, so good a man.

A few minutes more, the bridal couple were gone.

Tears fell fast from Ethel's eyes, but her husband's gentle touch, and soft tender voice again re-assured her.

The breakfast over, and the speeches concluded. Never, bride and bridegroom, never slight or undervalue the compliments paid you at your wedding feast. The goodness of which you are possessed, the rare and excellent qualities ascribed to you by your complacent friends.

Never was bride yet wedded, but was amiable and accomplished; never a bridegroom but whom some obliging friend rises to pronounce as worthy of all love and praise! Make the most of all this, ye wedded pair, for after this day you and your virtues will sink into comparative forgetfulness.

They will again revive when you are laid in your coffin. Then again they will shine forth, in the fond recollections of the friends who crowded your nuptial table.

Then will your faults and short comings be forgotten, and your virtues emerge, all the more brilliant for their temporary obscurity!

The Misses Fairfax were looking so pretty, and were so much admired, that they felt as if they almost forgave Ethel; and then the beautiful bracelets Lord Egmont had presented to them, was a consolation, though it might be small.

Aunty was alternately smiling and weeping, then raising her glasses to see the bridal couple better.

Lady Jane was melting into tears, as she did at Henrietta's marriage.

For Lord Egmont, he never yet looked so proud or so happy. After the breakfast, he went the round of the marquees, seeing the villagers, shaking hands with the old tenants, and winning golden opinions by his cheerfulness and affability.

The travelling carriage drew up to the door.

Ethel, ready dressed, was in her Aunty's room. The old lady weeping, as she sat in her large arm chair. Ethel was by her, on her knees.

"My darling Aunty! my precious one! Do not grieve for me. I shall soon be back to you, and indeed I am happy, and proud too, in being the wife of that noble, good man."

"Are you indeed happy, my child? One word only to say you have no regrets for the past, and that you would have chosen your husband above all others?"

"Doubt not, that I am really, truly happy, dear Aunty," replied Ethel, as she hid her face on the arm of the chair.

But poor Mrs. Marsdon still sobbed piteously, and clung to her. In vain Ethel tried to console her; she was getting nervous, when the door opened, and Lord Egmont came forward. (Lady Jane had sent him).

He took Aunty's hand, and in a soft voice asked her if she feared to trust her child with him?

"No, no! not that," sobbed the poor old lady; "but I have never parted with her since the day I took her from her mother, and now I shall be a wretched, lonely old woman!"

"No, not so, dear Aunty; let me call you so," whispered her nephew. "I will soon bring her back to you, and we will both unite to make our home, your happy one also."

And he soothed and comforted her with gentle words, and bright pictures of happiness.

"And now you must let Ethel come with me; we have some way to travel, and I must not have my new-found treasure over-tired."

"No; take her, Lord Egmont; and if only she makes you the good wife she has made me the loving, dutiful child, you will have reason to bless this day indeed! Now, God in Heaven bless you, my dear ones! and now go."

Ethel kissed the old lady again and again; then Lord Egmont drew her away, and when Auntie last saw them, through her blinding tears, Ethel was encircled by the protecting arm of her husband, and was looking back at her with a loving farewell.

Doctor Malvern heard her whisper, as she embraced him:

"Remember, dearest friend, your old charge. Ethel Egmont will not forget the dear and valued Rector of Ethel Vane."

The old man could not reply; he clasped her hand firmly as he led her to the carriage.

One more shout greeted the bridal pair, from the crowds thronging the gravel and the lawns, and Ethel bowing repeatedly, and trying to smile, though tears dimmed her eyes, bid adieu to her old home, to the friends of her youth.

"Long live Lord and Lady Egmont!" were the last sound she heard as the horses shot forth from the gates.

"Yes, long live Lady Egmont say I, to be the light of her husband's eyes, and the blessing of his life," smiled Lord Egmont, as he pressed his wife to his heart.

CHAPTER II.

THE scene is changed, from the autumn tints of old England to the still brighter, more radiant hues of Italy, where the sky seems to borrow from the sea, and the sea from the sky, its deep and exquisite blue.

Leaving Nice, Lord Egmont's quiet-looking, but luxurious travelling carriage wound its way towards Genoa, along the tortuous and beautiful path well known to many. Now by the shores of the inland sea, with its depth of colour and its deep repose; then leaving it, plunging in amongst groves of orange trees, which, meeting overhead, fill the air with a delicious fragrance. Now again in the heart of a sombre forest of

olives, the mountains uprearing their heads in the skies, and here and there tipped with snow. Out again on to the glorious shores, to which the craggy, snow-tipped mountains, the dark forests, and last of all the fragrant orange groves form an exquisite back ground.

Now the carriage stops to change horses, amidst a din of screeching, gesticulating, dark-eyed Italians, some postboys, some the hangers-on of the inn, and far above all, the beggars! The courier hurried all on, however, and after a few moments' delay, they had left the stormy little hamlet and its unclean inhabitants, and are again in the deep stillness, the beautiful scenes of the Cornice road.

Lord Egmont looked with delight on his wife's countenance, as leaning forward in the carriage, she watched with intense enjoyment each passing scene of beauty. She had never left England, and this rich luxuriance of colour and boldness of scenery charmed her artist's eye.

They had now been a fortnight away from England, and the quiet life she was leading

after the whirl and miserable excitement of her last few months at home, was beginning to tell favourably on her. She looked fresher, and in her eye was more life and animation. She forgot her woe and her trial at times, in the pleasure and novelty of her days, and when the remembrance did recur, though it swept across her mind like the dark cloud over the blue sky, it was becoming day by day less intense, and more endurable.

Her husband's devoted, unceasing kindness and watchfulness over her touched her deeply. She had always been accustomed to tenderness and care beyond that which falls to the ordinary lot; but this care, this love, far exceeded all she had ever experienced. No wish but was anticipated, no pleasure but was secured for her, even before she had imagined it.

Conscience at times was busy in her heart, whispering to her regrets that she had not told him all ere she had become his wife, by laying bare before him her whole history and the trouble through which she had passed; but

it was not too late yet, perhaps! One day she would take courage and reveal all; but not now! She would wait, and let him see first how entirely she should forget her early grief in the sunshine of his love! for she day by day seemed to realise more and more the possibility—nay, probability of this change in her feelings. She would wait until it was sufficiently developed, and then, then she would confide to him how the heart now his was once another's, and how deep a grief had fallen on the being who, though now so smiling and happy as his wife, was once bowed to the earth by a heavy and bitter disappointment!

They reached Genoa, with its splendid palaces, its rich churches, and its crowded harbour. Ethel was looking very tired when their carriage stopped, so Lord Egmont hurried her to her room, and made her rest on the gorgeous bed, almost the only piece of furniture in the room. He went away, after seeing her comfortably installed, with a book in her hand and a cup of coffee by her side, and as he left the

room, cast back a loving, earnest look on his bride, not lost on her, the dear object of his care and affection.

It was late in the afternoon when he returned.

"Imagine, Ethel, my meeting my uncle, Henry Thelluson, and his daughter in one of the churches."

"Did you really? Why, you have not met them for years, have you?"

"No, and my cousin I really didn't know again. She is a tall, strong-built damsel, and has quite outgrown the delicate, large-eyed, large-browed girl of fifteen years ago. They are all anxiety to see you, and it seems are in this hotel, but I said you were not to be disturbed to-day, so to-morrow they are to pay you their respects. I expect you will be amused by my cousin Thomasina (such a name, too!) Her father doats on her, and thinks her the one woman who redeems all the faults of her sex. I am afraid he will not think much of my Ethel," added he, with a fond smile and a caress, "for

there never were such opposites, as far as I can judge from my two hours' chat with them."

"You make me afraid of her! In what is she so formidable?"

"Oh, nothing! I'll leave you to judge about that," returned he laughing. "Come now, dinner is ready, and then I want you to stroll with me about the city and see the sunset from those heights; it will delight you."

And so they dined, and in the cool of the evening they mounted the hill behind Genoa and then sat down to enjoy the exquisite beauty of the Italian sunset.

Whilst there a gentlemen and a lady were seen ascending the steep path, and when near enough Lord Egmont recognised his uncle.

"Ethel! your time is come! no possibility of evading the dread moment; here comes Uncle Henry and the fair Thomasina."

Ethel watched the approaching couple. Colonel Thelluson was a tall man, with long grey, hair, and restless grey eyes, a weak mouth and a narrow forehead, which was now turned to

court the cooling breeze ascent.

Miss Thelluson was like long, but with deep-set dete and in the place of the fault her sire, she expressed firm. Slightly prominent was the lip with the dark intelligent eye and looked no ordinary degree. She was dressed in a dark coat of the same, into the pocket thrust her somewhat large tucked up on either side revealing substantial feet and ankles, expressing determination and

Ethel could not help smile in advance, more perhaps from the face of her husband. He came to them and with his wife came the introduction.

"Lady Egmont! I am so glad for the first time, instead of in stifling rooms at the Hotel," he

ONE TRIAL

"I am sure you have a strong heart and a good understanding, and are above the appalling weakness of our sex." And she withdrew her hand from the beloved pocket, to grasp Lady's with occasional force.

"Come here, Papa! I have not been introduced to Lady Egmont. Why, Henry, what are you about? talking to your Uncle, when you are depriving him of the far greater pleasure of talking to your wife! here he is, Lady Egmont," added the strong-minded female, "and a very good sort of man too! He has none of the airs of his sex, and knows perfectly well how to respect woman and her privileges, and to give her the right place in society!"

On this flourishing introduction she put him into her father's, his eye meanwhile meeting from one to the other with looks of surprise and admiration!

"Indeed, Lady Egmont! I am fully sensible of the genuine virtues and qualities of your sex, and that I am less, my daughter would have said so, for really, I do believe—I don't think

as she looked her eyes
from out of her eyes
for these scenes, as he
she waved her hand, with
had withdrawn from the
Egmont's heartily and with
"I suppose you mean to
returned Ethel smiling, "all
this graceful introduction to
but pray remember it was
me, for I am a very vain
cannot bear any such praise
I am considered not to rise."

"Is that so, really?" replied
"Now I do like you at once
speech. Most women, per
she looked on compassionately
as a kind of the creature who
to dwell on the weakness of women
"Oh, let children, as the flower
regard the man, without which it
and child. You say, I say, are
and though you look at the

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Lady Egmont, fo
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court the cooling breeze, after his difficult ascent.

Miss Thelluson was like her father, tall and long, but with deep-set determined-looking eyes, and in the place of the faulty mouth and chin of her sire, she expressed firmness and decision. Slightly prominent was the latter, and suited well with the dark intelligent eye which flashed bright and looked no ordinary degree of determined will. She was dressed in a dark stuff, with an overcoat of the same, into the pockets of which were thrust her somewhat large hands, her dress tucked up on either side revealed a pair of very substantial feet and ankles, and her general air expressed determination and independence.

Ethel could not help smiling as she saw her advance, more perhaps from seeing the amused face of her husband. He waved his hand to them and with his wife came forward to effect the introduction.

"Lady Egmont! I am so glad we've met here for the first time, instead of in those hot and stifling rooms at the Hotel," began Thomasine,

as she looked her new cousin from head to foot, from out of her earnest eyes. "You seem made for these scenes, and for this lovely spot," and she waved her hand, which for the moment she had withdrawn from the pocket, to shake Lady Egmont's heartily and with considerable force.

"I suppose you mean that for a compliment," returned Ethel smiling, "and I thank you for this graceful introduction to our acquaintance, but pray remember it must be the last you pay me, for I am a very vain person, so vain that I cannot bear any such praise, as it makes me fear I am considered not too wise!"

"Is that so, really?" rejoined Miss Thelluson, "Now I do like you at once for that sensible speech. Most women, poor things! (and here she looked as compassionate and almost as manly as a lord of the creation when allowing himself to dwell on the weakness of women) most women look for adulation, as the flower does for the rays of the sun, without which it must languish and wither! Now you, I see, are above all that, and though you do look so delicate and so fair,

I am sure you have a strong heart and a good understanding, and are above the appalling weaknesses of our sex." And she withdrew her hand once more from the beloved pocket, to grasp Ethel's with additional force.

"Come here, Papa! You have not been introduced to Lady Egmont. Why, Henry, what are you about? talking to your Uncle, when you are depriving him of the far greater pleasure of talking to your wife! here he is, Lady Egmont," added the strong-minded female, "and a very good sort of man too! He has none of the intolerance of his sex, and knows perfectly well how to respect woman and her privileges, and to give her the right place in society!"

With this flourishing introduction she put Ethel's hand into her father's, his eye meanwhile wandering from one to the other with looks of pleasure and admiration!

"Indeed, Lady Egmont! I am fully sensible of the glorious virtues and qualities of your sex, indeed had I not been, my daughter would have made me, for really, I do believe—I don't think

I'm carried away by parental partiality, but really now, when I look at Thomasina, I say to myself—"

"Now, come, none of that, sir, please," put in his paragon, "I'm not going to listen to any praise before Lady Egmont, for she has just set me down on that very score."

Lord Egmont, meanwhile, looked on the scene with intense amusement. The masculine, but intelligent-looking Thomasina by the side of his delicate, feminine, refined Ethel, and the wondering, pleased-looking old man, who listened to his daughter's tirades with all due submission and delight!

It was time to return, so the two gentlemen walked on, leaving the ladies *tête-à-tête*.

"Now take my arm, cousin mine," said Thomasina, "I do so like your looks and your air! now hush! I'm not going to pay compliments. Compliments, as some take them, are merely forms, and mean perhaps very little, but what I say, I mean, and a free and hearty expression of opinion is no disgrace to any one, neither to the

"No, no!" said Ethel, laughing; "don't expect me to do that; I like feminine graces too well to do anything so decided. You are not really masculine at heart, though you would wish to make the world believe so."

"All honour to your sagacity and penetration, cousin mine! I am not really at heart as you say, unfeminine, for I love the soft graces and deep sensibilities of our sex; but what I detest are the milk and water qualities, and the miserable dependence under which women exist in these degenerate times. But now, seriously, I like you, and am sure you unite these gentle virtues with sufficient self-dependence to make you just what is wanted; if it had not been so you would never have been chosen by Egmont."

"You do not seem to have met for a long time, yet you appear to think Lord Egmont next to perfection," said Ethel.

"My dear, since I have been able to remember, Egmont has been dinned into my ears as the noblest and best! I confess I felt bored somewhat by the eternal repetition of what Henry did and what Henry said. I would

have given a great deal that I should hear something against him, just for a variety. Well, after a while I began to see that his actions really justified all that was said about him, and to see the letters to my father poor Aunt Egmont wrote, it would delight you to have a sight of them. Then he behaved so well to a mutual cousin of ours, who shall be nameless—”

“Ah! I know all about that history,” said Ethel.

“Well, you can only know what redounds to his credit, and speaks of her heartless, base, conduct. They live somewhere abroad, I believe, where I don’t know, and don’t care. If it had not been for William they would not have bread to eat at this moment. Now, I call him a truly generous man, one who shows how true his forgiveness is, by the kindness which he showers on them. Ah, Ethel, you are a lucky woman, and if I ever could be disposed to envy the shackled condition of marriage, it would be in your case!”

They were now nearing their hotel, and it was

becoming dark and cold. So Lord Egmont gladly entered their rooms, for he feared the chilly air for his precious Ethel.

"Good night," said Lady Egmont, as she cordially shook hands with Thomasina. "We shall meet to-morrow, and sight see together, shall we not?"

"Oh! gladly; shall we not papa? I long for some one into whose ear to pour my overflowing ecstasy; and you, Ethel, I am sure will listen with patience and intelligence, whereas, papa, tiresome man! always goes to sleep, and Egmont, I know, would laugh at me."

"Not at all, not at all; why should I?" returned Lord Egmont.

"I see by your eye in a moment, my lord, that you look on me as eccentric and odd, and that you can hardly help giving vent to your sarcasm; I see it, so good night. I like your wife better than I do you, though I have only known her an hour; I'm sure she will tame me, and do me good, which I know I greatly need, and all that."

With this, Thomasina laid violent hands on Colonel Thelluson, who was just dropping off to sleep, having sunk on a sofa near, tired with his long days, following about his somewhat flighty daughter.

"Well, Ethel mine, what think you of your new cousin?"

"I like her very much, and think you inclined to be hard on her; she is frank and open, and there is a great charm in that."

"Indeed, yes," returned Lord Egmont; "there is a charm indescribable in truth and candour."

Ethel blushed and turned away. Again a sharp twinge of conscience!

"And now, darling Ethel, I must tell you that my uncle is very anxious to keep us company on our road to Florence, and has spoken to me about it. I cannot say I encourage the idea, for your society is too precious to me to wish for any third person; but then he seemed very urgent, so I temporised, and said I would consult you as to the route you wished to pur-

THE TRIAL.

"...in your own hands; if you
...have their company it is easily
...travel in their own carriage,
...to be with us at the hotels and in
...we shall make."

...assent, but was surprised for a
...and how much she regretted the in-
...her prolonged tête-à-tête with her
...and how easily she looked on any
...society; but she liked
...she was clever and amusing, and
...to discourage this first
...Sydney's family to friendship

...and after roaming about
...and glancing at
...congregated on the
...set off from the hotel on
...towards home.

...saw her father comfortably esta-
...with his cap on his grey head, and his
...book in his hand. In the pocket of the carriage
...sandwiches and oranges, and then placing

the man servant on the seat opposite, she mounted the rumble with her maid, her broad hat firmly fixed on her head, and with a look about her that said :

“ Here I am to see all that is to be seen, and to make any remarks I may choose on the country and on the people.”

Ethel's carriage was open, and she and her husband looked and laughed as Colonel Thelluson's equipage passed them, with his illiterate companion opposite, and his strong-minded daughter in the rumble.

They journeyed on, each day becoming greater friends. Thomasina admired Ethel intensely, and only wished she looked a little less pale, and was a little more decided and strong in her opinions ; but she saw she was clever and good, and that Lord Egmont just worshipped the ground on which his bride set her foot. For Ethel, she enjoyed Thomasina's originality, and thought there was little doubt but that a few years' experience of life would show her the fallacy of her ultra views, and tame her down into an intelli-

gent, sensible woman, with all the interest, too, about her of genius and originality.

Lord Egmont used to listen to their conversations with attention and interest. He liked to hear Ethel's soft voice urging her right-minded, sensible views, and he enjoyed Thomasina's wild burst of enthusiasm and eloquence as she dilated on the rights of her sex, on their superior qualities, on their subjugated condition, and the necessity which existed for some one to come boldly forward, and in asserting these rights, claim for them the privileges to which, by nature and qualification, they were entitled! Sometimes he would put in a word, sensible and strong, which scattered to the wind the somewhat vague theories of his cousin, and startled her into grave retrospection of her assertions. Then she laughed it off, and declared that men were no judges of such points, being bigoted and too partial.

"But why, Thomasina, not put all these grand ideas into print, and send them forth to this benighted generation?" said he one day.

"Print! don't talk of it, William. Once I was induced to write a novel. Well, my hero became under my hands so accomplished and daring a villain, that I actually became afraid of him. Like Frankenstein's creation, he followed me about and haunted me to such a degree that at times I was sleepless, his wicked face and awful deeds rising up to scare me in the dark hours of night. Well, I wouldn't be beaten; I tried to make him more amiable. But no! bad, worse he became. At last he murdered his intended bride, and planned the destruction of his father. I really had no power to restrain him."

"Good heavens! what a charming man!" laughed Lord Egmont, "do tell us what became of him?"

"I thought he should be killed too; but no! he would not be. I could not help myself, so he only went to Australia, and when last heard of was doing well at the diggings. I can see him now, smiling defiance at me over his nuggets!"

"Ha! ha!" laughed Lord Egmont. "You

can imagine, then, a master, though you have never met with one in real life."

"In the same way that I acknowledge the power of Lucifer. But wait! I'll tell you the rest. Gladly I took the MSS. to the publishers. I had a grand name for it, and the whole story embodied my views of the rights and privileges of our sex. The man looked at it for a moment glanced at the title, and told me he would let me know about it. In three weeks I received a short note. 'Mr. D.'s compliments and thanks. He returns the able MSS., but the style is not suited to the present taste; the moral is bad, he regrets to say, as vice triumphs in the hero, and injured woman sinks only lower in the scale than is acknowledged she occupies at present. A little more attention to the point, and a little less glaring wickedness in the principal characters would perhaps be better. Should Miss Thelluson choose to alter these little particulars in another story, Mr. D. would feel happy to look over it, but ventures to advise her to think no more of the present one.'"

"That was very discouraging, poor Thomasina," said Ethel, half smiling.

"Not at all! Ethel, I flew to the kitchen fire, for it was summer, and there was none in the library, and there page by page I burnt the wretched sheets, and as I caught sight of the monster's name, I laughed in derision and triumph, feeling 'I am now paying you off, my friend,' and since then his apparition, with his nuggets in hand, have ceased to haunt me, and 'Richard is himself again.'"

How Lord Egmont laughed! and how amused Ethel was! Colonel Thelluson looking on in delight at his daughter's enthusiastic face and vehement gestures.

At last they reached Florence, and Ethel set herself steadily to enjoy the delights of visiting the glorious galleries, somewhat familiar to her from much reading, and from frequent discourse with her husband.

Beautiful Florence! with its luxury of natural adornment, and its rich, inestimable treasures of art!

CHAPTER III.

DAYS and weeks glided away. Still the party lingered in Florence, passing their time in the never-wearying galleries, amidst the miracles of art, which are gathered on the walls, and which immortalise the spacious apartments.

Lord Egmont's fine taste and varied experience fitted him for Ethel's introduction to all these scenes, and she delighted in standing for hours listening to his remarks and gleaning fresh ideas, from his original and contemplative mind. She was beginning to look her brilliant self again, her colour returning to the wan cheek, and the animated look to the dark blue eye. She now often chatted with her husband with her former

vivacity, and he watched her with increased love and admiration, as day by day the cloud cleared from her countenance, and the pure light of her happy mind began again to shine forth.

It was astonishing to Ethel, knowing how full her mind had been of William's image, to see how by degrees it was fading away; he was all that was brilliant, bright, and loving, but the stability was wanting, which was now drawing her to her husband, and which having secured her respect and admiration, was in a fair way of confirming her love also.

Thomasina used to declare Ethel to be quite her beau ideal of beauty and grace, and used to tell Lord Egmont so often, and wonder to herself how any two people could be so perfect as her cousins.

She used to parade the streets and the galleries in her usual independent manner, but Lady Egmont had persuaded her to discard the jacket and the pockets, and adopt a more quiet costume, in which the fair Thomasina declared she felt tame and spiritless. Her lively companionship

and frank good temper cheered them all, and as Ethel had her husband all to herself the whole morning, she did not regret their joining company with the Thellusons.

Two months had now passed rapidly away since the marriage day, and it was becoming cold and cheerless at Florence. Lord Egmont therefore proposed going to Naples in a week's time, and the Colonel and his daughter gladly promised to accompany them; so it was settled, and Ethel wrote letters to her Aunty, saying how happy they had all been together; how her husband lavished every care and thought on her; how his companionship was more valuable to her every day; indeed, such a letter as made Aunty's heart leap for joy, and caused a sigh of thankfulness to escape from the bosom of the good, kind old friend at the Rectory. Pretty Fanny had her wedding postponed until the spring, by which time she hoped Ethel would be home again.

Lady Egmont's room was crowded with gifts from her husband; statuettes, alabaster lamps,

and many beautiful works of arts for her boudoir at the Grange.

She and Simpson were busy holding a consultation as to how to get all these treasures home, when a knock at the door, and Lord Egmont appeared.

"Just in time, my lord," cried Ethel. "Simpson and I are fairly puzzled how are all my beautiful figures are to be got safely to Devonshire?"

Lord Egmont threw himself into a chair, somewhat tired, and looking sad for him.

"I'll manage all that, Ethel mine; but if you are embarrassed with these small things, I know not what you will say when you see the gift I have made you to-day."

"Nay, now," said his wife, as she drew a stool to his feet, and knelt on it whilst she clasped his hand. "Nay, now, you have not been extravagant again for me."

"I never can be extravagant for you," returned he, with a fond smile, and a kiss on her cheek; "but to-day I have been very happy in making this purchase for you, and sad too, as it

revealed to me a scene of much wretchedness and disappointment."

"Oh! tell me, what is it that has distressed you?"

"No; first what has given me pleasure. You remember, darling, that pretty group of dancing girls, that took us rather in ——'s studio?"

"Yes, quite well."

"Well, I went to-day to purchase it for you, and when in the studio my attention was directed to a beautiful figure in the corner of the room. It was Eve; not Eve yielding at once to the temptation, but Eve shrinking from the first act of disobedience, with horror and dread in her countenance, and with the subtle tempter thrusting his sleek head and glittering eyes from the branches of the fatal tree. It struck me as a high work of art, and I asked who was the artist."

"'Oh! that figure, Sir; yes, it is very beautiful,' he said, 'but has been here a year without much chance of being purchased; but better times may come, I hope, for the artist is a very

poor young Englishman, and is obliged to do small commissions to get bread to eat, I fear.'

"Well, Ethel, I looked and looked at the figure, every moment liking it more and more; so to make a long story short, I got the address of the young man, and went to his studio. Heigh ho! such a miserable place, in the back streets of this crowded city. I found him out, a pale, delicate youth, with an unmistakeable look of genius, and with a frame tender as a woman's. He had one chair, poor fellow! to offer me, and there I stayed for some time; a long, melancholy history of his struggles and disappointments in a career into which he had thrown all his heart and soul; how he was reduced to the working up such pretty things as those dancing girls. You should have seen how his eye lit up when I talked of his darling Eve, which had left his hands just a year ago. He has a fine understanding, and a most refined taste, and I have rarely met with so charming a young fellow; so manly, and so vehemently struggling with his difficulties rather than apply to his

parents, who are not well off, and living in Germany."

"And then, dear Lord Egmont, I know what followed; you bought his Eve!"

"Yes, for my Ethel; but, oh! I never shall forget his countenance, such a struggle of joy, gratitude, and feeling. I never saw a human countenance so convulsed for the moment; he could not speak a word, only muttered something unintelligible, and left the room. I waited full a quarter of an hour for him, and at last he came back, with tears, yes, tears, Ethel, not yet dried on his long lashes. It really went to my heart to see them. We said very little, for then he could hardly utter, and I felt strangely moved, but at all events he is to be here to morrow to dine. I have one or two commissions for him, and I think I may otherwise be of use to him, poor fellow!"

"Dear, kind husband," whispered Ethel, as she kissed his hand; "but you have not yet told me his name."

"Ah, yes! his name. Here it is."

And he leant forward and drew out his pocket book, from which he extracted the card. On it was written :

“Cecil Bernard,
“Heidelberg.”

Ethel took it in her hand, and flushed red when she glanced at the name; then again became pale. She hastily rose from the stool, and turned away from her husband.

“Read me the card, please, Ethel, for I never looked at it. I was so full of the youth himself.”

Ethel did not reply, but handed it to him.

“Why, good Heavens! this is young Bernard then, whose parents I knew at Heidelberg, and whose sister—”

He paused. Why he did not continue his sentence he hardly could tell himself, but his wife thought she knew.

“Yes, it must be the brother of William Dillon’s intended wife,” returned she in a strange voice.

Lord Egmont looked up at her enquiringly,

but she had turned away, and was now busy apparently with wrapping up some of her statuettes for packing more safely.

A long pause, whilst the husband gazed thoughtfully at his wife, as she nervously and hurriedly occupied herself.

"But I have not yet thanked you for the 'Eve,' dear Lord Egmont; it is so good of you. Where shall it be placed? At Egmont?"

"Not at all at Egmont," said he, with a kind smile; "it is intended for your own Grange."

Another tap at the door, and in rushed Thomasina.

"Oh, Ethel! such an adventure as I have had. Papa and I were threading our way through all the close little streets at the back of the town, when we came upon a poor Englishman, utterly lost and disconsolate, vainly trying to comprehend the directions of some of the flower girls, in order to reach this hotel. He was looking from one to the other of the screeching damsels, trying hard to gather their meaning.

I saw his dilemma, and being an Englishman was enough, so I said in my most winning tones:

“ ‘Perhaps I can inform you, sir, of what you are vainly seeking to gather from this noisy crowd.’

“ ‘A thousand thanks,’ said he, with a soft, small voice “I’ve lost myself, and the Italian I have learnt is no more use to me here than if it was Hindoo. I want to get out of these horrible streets, and back to my hotel.’

“On enquiring I found it was this one, so I proposed we should return together You should have seen his look of gratitude and comfort. I had the greatest difficulty to prevent myself from tucking him under my arm, and bringing him safely home. Now, Ethel, I suppose you know him, for as he was looking at me through his eyeglass, with a sort of determined air, as if it said, ‘I’ll fascinate her,’ I mentioned ‘Lady Egmont.’ You should have seen his face; his cheeks got hot as a fire; his little glass dropped out of his eye, and he looked altogether utterly dumbfounded.

I brought him safe home, and he is now with papa in his room. He made me laugh so! How any mother could have let such a helpless little being loose from her apron string puzzles me! But who is he?"

Ethel laughed.

"Your description is so vivid, that I am sure it must be Mr. Fairfax! I doubt not you astonished his small mind."

Lord Egmont laughed, too, and it ended in their all adjourning to the general sitting room, where was indeed the adorable Jemmy!

He looked the image of helpless confusion for a moment, but Lady Egmont's manner was so calm and kind that he soon recovered himself.

"How long have you been here, Fairfax," said Lord Egmont.

"About three days, and I am very nearly sick of it, I can tell you. All alone, it is dull work, and I shan't be sorry to find myself on my road home."

"But do you leave this for England, then?"

"I did intend to go to Naples, but, as I said

before, I find it precious dull work, without a soul to listen to me, or I mean to listen to, when sight-seeing. If my mother could only have come!" added he, with a piteous look.

"But suppose you spend to-day with us, Mr. Fairfax?" said Ethel kindly, "and we will indulge ourselves in hearing your remarks on the pictures, for we have worn ours threadbare with the constant interchange."

"You are very kind, I'm sure, Miss Vane—ah! beg pardon, Lady Egmont. I shall be only too thankful to hear my native tongue in place of this vile Italian jargon; and to meet old friends is ah! very, very charming."

He was getting into his old ways again. He fixed his glass in his eye, but not with a view of charming Lady Egmont, but to bring all its full force of captivation on the "remarkably fine girl," who stood on one side looking at him with a glance half amused, half compassionate, as one would do on some poor helpless, yet interesting child.

"We dine at eight, and you must be with us,

and to-morrow, too, mind, Fairfax; and who knows, perhaps we shall carry you off to Naples nolens volens," said Lord Egmont.

("Catch me!" thought the small man).

The whole of that day he was with them, and feeling still shy of Ethel, devoted himself to the "fine girl," who, in compassion for him, exerted herself more than usual to be entertaining and agreeable. She often startled him by her vehement and strong opinions, but he was at the same time delighted to find that he was not required to have any himself, and he was unconsciously confirming all Thomasina's crude notions of the inferiority of his sex to her own higher-souled, more gifted one!

Ethel was ready dressed the next day for her dinner party. She was alone in the large, half-furnished room, she paced nervously up and down it, looking, in her long white dress, like some restless spirit. She was now to see Cecil Bernard, brother to her who was to be William's wife. Had the later peace and comfort, almost happiness of her married life been owing to the

mere slumbering of those feelings for William which she hoped were dying, if not dead? if not, why the dread and fear and shrinking which came over her when she heard the name of her kind husband's *protégé*? She thought of Lord Egmont's tenderness, his love; tears filled her eyes as she called to mind his countless acts of watchfulness and care. When her mind rested on William it was with fear, not love. Thank God for that! To compare him with her matchless husband, she could not, but she had a nervous dread still of seeing this young Bernard, and tracing in his features, the probable likeness to his sister.

At last he arrived. She was still alone. With a cold hand and trembling voice, she welcomed him, apologising for Lord Egmont, who had not yet come in from dressing.

Young Bernard looked at his beautiful hostess with rapture. Her graceful figure, her classically formed head, and her regular features, realising his imaginings of beauty in their highest form. He stammered forth a few words,

and both were silent for a time. At last Ethel said in an uncertain voice:—

“Your name is not altogether unknown to me, Mr. Bernard, for a very early friend of mine, an old playfellow, is, I think, about to marry your sister; Mr. Dillon I mean.”

“Oh! do you know William Dillon, Lady Egmont?” The fine face of the young artist lit up with enthusiasm. “Now is he not a glorious fellow? I remember him three years ago at Heidelberg, the most perfectly handsome, most engaging of human beings. He was the most fascinating man, to men as well as women. I remember thinking him the most perfect creature and was, I think, much fonder of him than my sister, who was indeed but a child then.”

“He is indeed all you say,” returned Ethel in a low voice, “and I trust may succeed in life. When—when does the marriage take place?”

“That I cannot tell you, Lady Egmont, for, alas! I have not heard from home for a long time. I must honestly tell you that I feared to write, from a dread of revealing circumstances

which would give pain to my dear parents; but all this morning I have been employed in a letter to them at Heidelberg, for the goodness and great kindness of Lord Egmont has enabled me to speak more hopefully of my prospects."

He saw Ethel's kind interested look. He had been so long a stranger to the sympathy and tenderness which he had left in his own home, that he talked away without constraint, and entered on all his now bright hopes with the ardour and inexperience of one of his age and temperament.

"I cannot, no I cannot describe to you the tumult of happiness and delirium I have been in since yesterday morning. Now Eve is gone, I shall have funds to begin on a great work which has been growing in my brain for years, and to which the miserable little efforts to which I have devoted myself, to gain my daily bread are as grains of dust, to the firm and immoveable blocks of marble. I have new life, new hopes now, for which oh, how I thank God, the giver of all good!"

Ethel encouraged him to talk on, and was

deeply interested in his conversation, when Lord Egmont entered.

Such was Cecil's feeling for his new found patron, the man who had by an act of liberality scattered the clouds which darkened his horizon, that when he turned and saw him, he again was overcome and almost speechless. Lord Egmont shook hands with the young artist with earnestness and warmth, and the rest of the party entering at that moment, he introduced him to them all.

They had a very cheerful, pleasant dinner, and Thomasina, who sat next Mr. Fairfax, amusing herself with his oddities, made a greater impression still on that innocent mind, as he answered her questions, and saw her listen with interest and evident entertainment to his replies.

"Well, Fairfax," said Lord Egmont, from the bottom of the table, "what has delighted you most in Florence?"

"Can you ask, my Lord?" with a simpering glance at the substantial Thomasina.

"Ah! yes, that of course; you're a very gallant man, we know," laughed Lord Egmont.

"Yes; indeed he is," chimed in Colonel Thelluson, "we agree exceedingly well on the infinite superiority of the fair sex; he thinks with me, that to waste time on dull marble and paintings is inexcusable when we have the living, animated matchless woman, constantly before us."

"Is that really and truly your opinion, Mr. Fairfax?" said Thomasina with an insinuating glance.

"Yes, really and truly," returned Jemmy, determined, at all costs to pay a delicate compliment to his new charmer; "in fact I see very little to admire in those interminable galleries, and that mawkish statuary; all the feeling I have about them is a wish to have them out in alleys and lawns at home, like Cremorne, you know, Miss Thelluson, and the tea gardens at Margate."

He quite forgot in his delight at hearing his own small voice, that an artist was present, and to have seen that artist at that moment; how he gazed at "Jemmy," with horror and amazement as he spoke thus sacrilegeously of the sacred

bright imagery, brought it before his companion's mind.

"Beautiful indeed!" said Lord Egmont; "this only confirms me in my scheme. Now listen to me. There is an approach to Lady Egmont's apartment at Egmont now hung only with pictures; it is my desire to adorn it still farther with one or more groups of marble and without naming the subject to her, I have been looking about me for such groups as I think worthy of the position. What you describe to me now convinces me that on many points you agree with me, and I would therefore wish to make this proposition: that you should work out this group for my purpose, and that you may be under no pressing anxieties, I shall be glad to place the sum at the value you affix to it at once in your hands."

Poor Cecil was wondering whether he was in Heaven, or still on the cold, uncharitable Earth. He could say nothing, and his noble, kind-hearted patron seeing his face, continued:

"Now, you see, Bernard, I am very anxious

that these works should, as I said before, be worthy of the purpose, and I must have your mind free, and wholly at liberty from all anxieties and all cares, so that you may throw your whole soul into them. You are weak and low-spirited now; you must recover health and elasticity, so that you may pursue your labours with vigour and with happiness to yourself; so you see it is as much for myself as for you that I propose placing this money in your hand in advance."

"I see, I see, my lord," said Cecil, in a faint and trembling voice. "What can I say, what can I do to show you my gratitude?"

"Just this: throw down your chisel for a time, forget it if possible; go to Rome, or anywhere, where you may be happy and improved in your divine art; study as much as you please, but refrain from working out your own imaginings just yet; seek the beauties and the immortal treasures of God's works; imbue your mind with the contemplation of them, it will raise it higher and higher. In the summer go to Swit-

zerland, and by that time I give you leave to commence. Now, these are my wishes; I shall take care that, if you have the inclination, you shall not want the means to carry them out. What say you?"

"Say, my lord, that I gratefully, most gratefully, accept your noble, disinterested goodness. I feel a happy man, and a proud one too, to be permitted to owe an obligation to one like yourself."

Lord Egmont turned and shook his hand, and they proceeded in silence for a time. The patron rejoicing and grateful for the power given him of assisting the friendless, and encouraging deserving talents; and the artist bewildered by his good fortune, and the glorious prospects opening to him.

They talked at last somewhat lengthily on the subject, and then adjourned to the drawing-room; there was Ethel still playing with the Colonel, and Miss Thelluson, who was by this time tired of Jemmy, listening, half asleep, to his mawkish little histories of himself and his mother.

Cecil Bernard went to Lady Egmont, and sat down by her; the Colonel spoke to his nephew, and Cecil then whispered:

"I have been made so happy, so proud, so hopeful to-night, I cannot resist telling you, for praises of that noblest of men, Lord Egmont, cannot but be grateful to his wife. I cannot say more than that from a miserable, hopeless being, he has transformed me into what I am. God bless him! God bless him!"

"Ah!" said Ethel, her eyes filling with tears, as she looked at her husband, "he is always doing some act of goodness. Would that I were like him!"

Cecil gazed at her, with her lovely face, and pure, soft look riveted on his patron, and thought she might be deserving even of him.

CHAPTER IV.

STILL, still, every hour, every day, Ethel regretted more and more her want of confidence in her husband before their marriage. The consciousness that there was a secret, rose up like a dark cloud between her and him, and cast a lingering shadow on the otherwise brighter path of her existence. Each day, too, it seemed more difficult to tell him of her past, for as she became more alive to his goodness, and her heart more responsive to his tenderness, she dreaded still farther giving him pain. Her pride, too, that fatal pride, came in against her higher and better feelings, and whispered pernicious counsel.

Lord Egmont seemed to have forgotten her embarrassment when he named Bernard to her, and she hoped he might think of that no more.

The young artist had been closeted with his patron the morning before the party left Florence, and every arrangement made to carry out the proposed scheme. So with a grateful heart and a humble spirit (for it is difficult to have one without the other), Bernard left the hotel, from whence Lord Egmont and his party were about starting, and in a few days he too had set out, having written a letter of such happiness and ecstasy to his mother, as made her shed tears of joy whenever her mind reverted to it, and whenever she drew it forth to look again on the glowing, earnest words, which spoke his happy, grateful thoughts, and his brilliant hopes for the future.

Rome passed for the present, and Naples was reached, and around the evening's board were Lord Egmont and his wife, and the Colonel and his daughter, and, wonderful to relate! Mr. Fairfax.

"Well, Mr. Fairfax, so you see you really are here, notwithstanding your determinations against it," said Ethel smiling.

Jemmy looked half foolish, and cast a sheepish glance at Thomasina, who, all unconscious, was but carelessly attending to the business of the table, as, with eyes fixed on the beautiful Bay of Naples, she leant back in her chair.

"Yes, indeed, here I am; I can hardly believe it, but I am sure I should have been on my way to Devonshire by this time if it had not been for the attraction of your society. I do hate to be at the trouble of thinking, and like to have some one to decide for me."

Here another glance at Thomasina.

"Is it possible then, Mr. Fairfax, that you would rather be led than lead?" said that young lady, fixing her eyes sternly on the little man.

"Why, Miss Thelluson, we can't all lead in this world, and there are some people who, by the evenness of their temper and the ductility of their minds, are more calculated to be good followers; but mind you, if they have sufficient

penetration to see that what they follow is right; and that penetration I flatter myself I have."

"With the good temper, etcetera, I suppose, Mr. Fairfax. Well, you give yourself a very good character, as far as you can. Now I'll tell you my idea of what a man should be."

"Ah, do now," said Jemmy, settling himself in his chair towards her, and fixing the wicked glass into his fascinating eye.

"Well, a man to command my respect must be stern, determined, unyielding, with a proud spirit that spurns being led; a haughty, cold manner, an impenetrable mind, and a look as if he lived in—in—"

"The clouds, perhaps," broke in Lord Egmont laughingly.

"Not at all; I mean as if he lived in an ever present consciousness of the littleness and shortcomings of everything and everyone about him. When I meet such a man, I shall then say he is superior to woman, but not until then."

"Well said, well said, Thomasina," chimed in the old Colonel chuckling, being himself the very

opposite of this wonderful creature of imagination.

"I hope if you do marry you will not give us such an unamiable cousin," added Lady Egmont.

"No fear of such a man taking a fancy to me, Ethel; I'm not the sort, though methinks it would add to his grandeur to tame and render submissive such a wild being as myself. But no! no such luck for me! Now I believe my lot is to fall in with people I can lead, such people as papa and (pray forgive me) Mr. Fairfax, and a dozen others I could name."

"I'm sure you could lead me," whispered Jemmy, with a tender glance; "I should like it."

"Ah! I daresay," returned Thomasina, with a contemptuous look, "but independent as I am, I have in my woman's nature a desire rather of being led and directed myself."

"But then, you know, you think so highly of your own sex, Miss Thelluson, and quite right too."

"Yes, I do; but then sometimes I think my notions may not be quite sound. However, you can't understand all this."

And she hastily rose from the table, pointing imperiously to her gloves, which had fallen beneath it, and which Jemmy submissively picked up and gave her, with a tender look from the china blue eyes, and a little sigh which heaved his small embroidered shirt front softly.

The next day Ethel and Lord Egmont were together in one of the churches. He was looking at a picture on one side of a small chapel, and in the meantime his wife's attention had been directed to a tall, graceful form, which now advanced and knelt before an altar in the north aisle. There was something in the air of the individual which marked her as distinguished, and at the same time English, and Ethel watched her with interest as she humbly clasped her hands and bowed her head before the glittering shrine. Some moments elapsed, and she lifted her head but not her eyes, which she fixed on a book. This she commenced reading. As

ONE TRIAL.

... the small wooden chair,
... black, she looked
... the road. tears fell
... were they wiped away,
... but still the
... in a shower,
...

... with the aspect
... on her features,
... with the faded
... but still bear-
... long traces
... and
... exhibiting the
... complexion.
... and
... near
... up for a
... a first moment
... important.
... and had
... The tall, black figure glided
... before the travellers had reached the

entrance she had disappeared. Ethel said nothing, but thought who could this beautiful woman be who seemed to be so strangely startled by the sight of her husband!

That evening all the party were to drive out, and return by moonlight. It had been warm and close, and Lord Egmont complained of headache.

"Indeed I fear I shall be a very poor companion for you all, and so I shall take my position here, on this sofa, looking over this beautiful bay, and stay quietly until you return."

"Nay, but I cannot leave you," said his wife gently, "I will stay and read to you; indeed, I assure you, I don't care for this drive" (without you, she might have added.)

"Thanks, darling," returned he gratefully, "but I want you particularly to go, and my uncle will be so disappointed."

"But cannot we put it off until you are better?"

"Hardly, I fear; so, Ethel, you must go, tho' it will be dull work for me here; but before you

THE TRIAL

"I asked you to put
as many of your letters as I will read them
in the box in my day."

"I will try to assure herself for
the future, she placed it
in the box, and taking
the letters, she placed them ranged

"I will try to assure herself for
the future, she placed it
in the box, and taking
the letters, she placed them ranged

"I will try to assure herself for
the future, she placed it
in the box, and taking
the letters, she placed them ranged

"I will try to assure herself for
the future, she placed it
in the box, and taking
the letters, she placed them ranged

"Look up, my Ethel, tell me if you are happy, if you do not regret the act which made you mine; if there is nothing in the past that embitters your present; tell me this and look up."

But, no, Ethel's face was still hidden on that true and faithful heart; she could not look up, and with the unflinching eye of truth tell him there was nothing in the past she regretted. Oh if only she could have then and there, clasped by his arm, have whispered all the history of the days gone by, the misery it would have saved her; the misery it would have saved him; it was not pride now, it was cowardice which feared to risk a diminution of his love.

At that critical moment they heard Colonel Thelluson's voice calling for Ethel. Hastily she arose, with downcast eyes and blushing cheeks, for as yet there was no reply to her husband's question.

She put her hand on his forehead, and in a low voice whispered:—

"I can never regret the moment I became your wife; rely on that."

"God bless you for that, wife mine. And now go; come back soon and you will find me still waiting for you here."

And he watched her, as in her gay attire she left the room, not, however without casting behind her a regretful look at leaving him.

For an hour after that Lord Egmont remained thoughtful and musing, dwelling with love and pride on his beautiful, beloved wife; picturing to himself his life with her in their home; how he would devote himself in future to his duties publicly (for a happy being is full of good resolutions); how he would exert all the energies of his mind, and the vigour of his understanding, to their proper fulfilment, knowing that in so doing he should best deserve the immeasurable felicity of his home with Ethel.

At last he gave a sigh of happiness, and turned to the heap of letters. They were all scented with a perfume Ethel always used, and as the gentle air wafted the fragrance towards him, it seemed as if she were there, by his side.

Reader! I wonder if you can understand the feelings of the teller of a story, as he draws near an epoch in the history of his hero or heroine, which speaks of their joy, or relates of their woe; how, in the latter case, he hesitates and enters lingeringly on the task. Somehow his characters have become endeared to him, and he with pain and regret now unfolds the dark scroll of their history, and brings to light, as in due course the events of their existence pass on, the sorrows and trials to which all are inevitably more or less prone; how he would fain postpone it a little longer, and allow some more bright rays of light from the fount of earthly bliss to strike across their path ere they enter the dark shadow beheld near; but linger and hesitate as he may, the time must come at last, and the tale be one additional proof, that man is not here to be bright and happy only, but that trial, vexation, and disappointments must be his lot!

Lord Egmont lazily perused one after the other of the various letters given him by his wife. At last he opened one without the ordi-

new commencement. He read a few lines abstractedly, but saw enough to make him turn hastily to the page where was signed the name of the writer. "William Dillon;" it puzzled him, he again looked over the pages, and ended by reading the whole letter through; only then did he understand to whom it was addressed, and to what purpose. It was the letter to Ethel which had reached her from William after the time when his engagement had become known to her.

... for Ethel's husband!
... loved her, who held
... heart as the pure
... should have allowed
... this history,
... have been at the
... blind but to
... it
... who had
... tried to
... to
... tell her husband of all that may have occurred

before they met, but this would be again no part of the character he believed Ethel to have been. To have been! Yes, it was past, this dream was again dispelled; he believed he had found a firm, an honest, truthful nature, and oh, that he should be again disappointed! His early years, his early love and its speedy perishing, came forth before him like ghostly phantoms, asking whom could he trust again? He walked up and down the room hastily, threw himself impatiently on the sofa, his eyebrows knitted and the old look of care dulling his fine face. He read and re-read the letter, saw enough to make him certain that the writer believed in the love of her he was addressing.

“This explains now her paleness, her dispirited look, and I have been so blind all this time, blinded by my love for her! and worse than all that she should have married me, loving him!”

How the bright idol he had made for himself was defaced and injured by this discovery! how he then longed that she were free, and he not there to remind her of her thralldom. Married

CHAPTER II.

... and then she said
... her husband's wife. Those
... her ear as
... She could
... when she was
... deeply
... he is
... deliver
... why
... or if
... he could
... concerning
... William
... thought
... took
... with
... was:
... he
... of
... have
... he
... my
... my

He was still pacing to and fro, the sun sank and the beautiful bay became dull, and by degrees hidden from sight, until the moon, red as fire, arose over it, and as it mounted higher and higher in the heavens, shed a bright deluge of glittering drops on the still waters.

"My lord, here is a person with a letter for your lordship, and he awaits an answer."

"Who is it? I know no one here, let them call again; say I am engaged and not well." And the door closed on the Italian courier.

Again the restless, rapid walk, and again the appearance of the courier.

"I am sorry to trouble your lordship, but the young person is very urgent for this letter to be read."

"Very well then, bring lights. I suppose I must see to it," and Lord Egmont reluctantly took the note in his hands and longed to read it and dismiss the bearer, that he might again be alone with his thoughts.

The lights came and Lord Egmont hastily broke open the note; he read, and in a moment

called for his hat and cloak; he was going out, he said, but should be in shortly.

His valet came. It was cold and chilly. Should he call a carriage?

"No, no! I will walk, and I shall be back soon."

"And if her ladyship returns meanwhile, my lord?"

"Ah, true; tell her I have gone out to see a friend, and shall be back in an hour's time or so; and now, here, give me my hat and gloves," he descended the staircase and hurriedly left the hotel, signing to the boy awaiting him to lead the way.

In the meantime the excursionists drove along tolerably merry, and Ethel was enjoying the lovely scenery and the pure mild air.

Mr. Fairfax and Colonel Thelluson sat opposite to the two ladies, and if devoted admiration could have satisfied Thomasina, she would have been this day the proudest and happiest of human beings, for both her father and Jemmy seemed to rival each other in applauding her

sayings and acquiescing in her high-flown laudations of her sex.

Ethel was quite silent the greater part of the way, her thoughts mostly with her absent husband, and regretting that he was not with them on this excursion. She missed his voice, his conversation, his tender look and manner, and she gave a very abstracted attention to her companions.

They passed a group of Italian peasants. A rich cluster they looked of dark-complexioned, bright-eyed girls.

"What a beautiful face," said Thomasina; look there, Ethel, that one I mean with her head turned this way, and the basket in her hand."

Ethel turned and observed her.

"Yes, she is very pretty; but I saw a still more lovely face this morning in a church. English, certainly, though very pale, with such large blue eyes, and long silken curls of a golden colour, so sweet and distinguished a look she had, though she was poor, evidently."

"Was she very tall?"

"Decidedly tall, hardly very tall; but why?"

"I'll tell you why, Ethel. Our mutual cousin, you know who I mean, is in Naples now. Papa saw her yesterday, and your description assures me it was she you met to-day? Did Henry see her?"

"No, I think not," said Ethel, as a strange chill came over her.

She reflected a moment.

"Now you name it, I believe it must have been she, for she looked startled when she saw Lord Egmont, and hurried away; it must have been she."

"No doubt it was. The last accounts I heard she and her wretched husband were living somewhere in Venice. Why they come here I cannot tell. Does she still look so beautiful then? for she has had unheard of sorrows and trials," added Thomasina.

"Yes, indeed, still most beautiful. I do not wonder that Lord Egmont loved her," and again a cold blast seemed to pass Ethel.

The moon rising, saw them on their way home,

Ethel impatient to reach her husband, ceased to enjoy herself. She was anxious to be at home again, and when the carriage stopped at the door, she hurried up-stairs into her drawing-room. There the windows were open, and the cold moon shining in on the furniture and on the sofa, on which, drawn to the window, she expected to see Lord Egmont. But no, he was not there. She hastily went to her bed-room. No, not there. She re-entered the sitting-room, and then the courier appeared.

"His lordship had been sent for by a friend, had gone out, and would be back shortly; his love to his ladyship, and he begged her not to be uneasy, as he was feeling better, and the air would be of service to him still farther."

Ethel replied not. She coldly received the message, and turned to the window.

There could be no doubt about it; he had gone to see this cousin, the cousin of his early love, the beautiful being she had that morning met in the dark aisles of the church.

Had he known of her being in Naples, and

feigned the excuse of illness in order to effect a meeting with her? No, no, Ethel would not believe this of her true-hearted, noble husband.

But she dreaded his encountering again the woman who had enchained and fascinated him once. Ethel feared that comparison with her would end in fatal regret that the youthful dream of his life had been so dispelled.

A thousand terrors and anxieties awoke in her heart; she had not half appreciated her happy lot in being his wife; what if meeting this cousin should wean him from her, who was beginning to love him so well.

The hours crept on; at last Thomasina tapped gently at the door. Ethel started, thought it was her husband; she turned away with a sigh of disappointment.

"Ethel, is not Egmont come home yet?"

"No, not yet. I hope nothing has happened, but in this strange place I feel anxious, nervous!"

"Nonsense, no fear of anything; but Simpson told my maid you were still here, and without lights too, and so cold, Ethel."

She felt her cousin's hands; they were indeed death-like.

"The air is so chilly; do let me shut the window."

"Let me look out once more then, and see if I can see him coming."

And Ethel stretched out her head, to send one long, eager, and searching look up and down.

The Bay was sleeping calmly and coldly in the pale moonlight; but it was getting late, and hardly a form was seen moving, certainly not the one for which the wife watched.

Thomasina summoned a servant, and directed a light to be put to the large logs of wood lying on the hearth.

Gradually the blaze shot upwards, and illumined the room, and she insisted on shutting out the cold light, and made Ethel come near the burning wood fire.

"Now, don't be absurd, Ethel; I really did not expect to see you so anxious, almost terrified. I suppose it is always the way with mar-

ried people for a few months, and then they get more callous to each other's proceedings."

"No, I shall never be callous to his proceedings, Thomasina; but really I am not very anxious," with a faint attempt to appear light and careless; "only it seems curious he should be out at this hour; he was sent for, the courier says."

"Rely on it, Ethel, it's nothing more than this cousin, who has found him out, and is again in difficulties. It is always so. The times and times that he has saved the husband from one disgrace or another. What a meeting it will be for them though," she continued, as, with eyes fixed on the burning embers, she gave her thoughts to her absent cousins. "What a meeting, after seven year's estrangement and coldness. Papa says Egmont is not like the same man he used to be in those early days. That trial seems to have sobered him, and made him a graver being than his nature would warrant. But he has been really happy with you, Ethel; that I see every day and hour," she added this, observing

her cousin's anxious, troubled look, as it dwelt on the fast consuming logs.

"Oh! he deserves to be happy, Thomasina; but I—I can never be to him what his first love was; I can never awaken such feelings in his heart. Indeed, he told me the freshness of his affections had passed away; he told me so, the day he asked me to be his wife."

And she thought of the scene; the green sward, the overhanging branches of the trees, the declining sun, whose light shone on his face as he asked her to trust her happiness with him.

They talked on and on. The night deepened. Again Thomasina threw additional logs on the expiring fire, and gradually the anxiety of them both grew into terror.

What could make him so late?

The hour struck on the small clock two!

At that instant a step was heard, the door opened, and Lord Egmont appeared, with his long cloak hanging from his shoulders, and his face pale and grave.

"Thank goodness," said Thomasina, "you are come home. Ethel and I were getting so anxious. Now, good night; I shall go now, and don't play us such a trick again."

And she left the room hastily, leaving the husband and wife alone, and looking coldly on each other.

CHAPTER V.

FOR Ethel, now that her husband had appeared, and her terror at his absence removed, began to remember where he had been, how engaged, and the latent spark of jealousy in her disposition rose into a flame.

Lord Egmont did not approach her with the usual kiss and welcome.

No! he went to the fireside, and there nervously removed one log from another, and bent down to warm his cold hands.

"Ethel, I am afraid I have alarmed you by remaining out so much longer than I expected, but—"

Ethel wondered at his cold manner, his averted

looks. Had the revived acquaintance with his cousin already been productive of such consequences towards his wife?

"Yes, I was alarmed; I do not deny it. This place is strange to me, and I did not know where you could have been."

"I will tell you; first one minute."

And he went to the table and drank off a tumbler of water, and paced once or twice up and down the room with moody looks and a hurried step.

His wife stood by the fireside, glancing at him from time to time with a face full of conflicting emotions, in which resentment was most conspicuous. She pretended to be indifferent, and turned away at last.

"No necessity, my lord; I am not to expect you to account for your proceedings to me," said she coldly.

He looked at her, surprised in his turn by her unusual manner; but the pressure of his thoughts, his painful thoughts, enabled him to give but a passing observation on it.

"Stay, Ethel, that is absurd. I wish to tell you where I have been, whom I have seen, and to ask your assistance in a scheme for helping one who was—was—very dear to me once."

His wife looked proudly on him as he gave utterance to these few words with difficulty and hesitation. The revival of long-slumbering memories seemed to have shaken him and deeply touched his loving, pitying nature.

"I think, my lord, I can guess whom you have visited this evening, and only regret that you did not name your intention to me, so that I might have at once joined you in this scheme."

"Ethel! do you suppose I knew when you left that I should have not been here on your return?"

"Really I do not know, Lord Egmont; but it seems strange to me that as you were unable to drive out with me, your health should have admitted of your excursion an hour afterwards."

The words were hardly uttered but she regretted them. That fearful pride! into what

was it not leading her? Where and when might its perilous course stay?

Lord Egmont turned on her a look of surprise and indignation. He did not attempt a reply, but waved his hand contemptuously.

His wife shrank back and fixed her eyes on the burning embers.

"No! Ethel, I do not deceive. I thank Heaven I have concealed nothing from you. I would wish I might think the same confidence had been reposed in me."

He again paced up and down the long room. She stood looking guilty and abashed. No reply.

At last he came towards her. She shrank from meeting his eye. Her youthful, graceful figure, her gentle air, and the feeling that whatever had happened, her happiness was now in his power, touched the husband. He took her hand and drew her towards him.

"Ethel, let there be no misunderstanding between us. Alas! I know there can be no such love towards your husband as makes the married

life one of such happiness, such content; but still let us have each other's confidence from this time."

"No such love?" faltered Ethel.

But he seemed not to hear her; his mind was again reverting either to the fatal discovery of her deceit or to the meeting with his cousin. Anyway, he replied not; he still held his wife's cold hand in his still colder one, but the clasp was not so firm, and at last he dropped it.

"I grieve, Ethel, that you have not found me worthy of your confidence. I think—nay, I am certain, that had you reposed it in me, I should not have disappointed you; I should have strengthened you in the resolutions you in your better moments doubtless formed."

Ethel looked astonished, and then she trembled.

"I do so love truth, candour, honesty. When and where shall I find it?"

And he clasped his hands, and walked hurriedly again. He stopped opposite to her, and saw her guilty, humbled look.

"Ethel, I have read this afternoon William Dillon's letter!"

"Letter! what letter?"

And she looked at him with distended eyes.

"That letter in which he speaks to you of his love, and in which I gather it was returned."

"How, how did you come by it?" said Ethel faintly.

And she sank on a chair.

"You gave it to me with others this afternoon, I read it at first abstractedly; my mind was so full of my wife and my happy future, that I hardly attended to the purport of the lines. At last the truth dawned on me, and I awoke to the bitter knowledge that she whom I loved and almost worshipped was after all no more truthful, no more to be depended on than the rest of her sex!"

He said this bitterly, and again left her side to resume his restless pace up and down, up and down.

Strange to say that at this moment pride

owned unlimited sway in our heroine's mind. It seemed to come sweeping on like the relentless savage flood, engulfing all that was pure, and fresh, and grateful, in its headlong course. Her love for her husband, her gratitude for his goodness, her anxious wishes to be worthy of him, all, all fell before this baneful, hateful passion!

She drew herself up and looked proudly at him. Her abashed and timid air gave place to one of defiance and independence.

"I am sorry, my lord, you inadvertently read that which I had intended openly to have shown you at some future time."

"Did you, did you really intend doing so, Ethel?"

And he stopped, and eagerly caught at this as the drowning man clutches at the floating reed.

"I did," returned she, "but at my own discretion. I considered myself doing my duty in every way towards you, and at liberty to retain that which I had a right to do, as long as I saw fit."

She said this in a haughty tone, and for the time was under the uncontrolled dominion of the tyrant pride.

"But surely you see the injustice you have inflicted on me by becoming my wife, knowing that you loved another man with that love which a bride should only bestow on her husband? By Heavens! I have not deserved this of you, Ethel. You have been betraying my love, my confidence."

"Nay, my lord, remember I told you I did not, could not love you as I could wish, but that I hoped, I trusted the time would—"

"Pshaw! I know you did; but did you, can you suppose, Ethel, that I attributed your lukewarmness to the right cause? Can you believe that I would take a wife to my heart to shower on her the fullness of my love and every affection of my soul, with the knowledge that she was not merely indifferent to me, but that I was the bar to her union with one who alone possessed her heart? No, no; I could not have done so. You know I could not."

His careworn, saddened face touched his wife. Bitterly, more bitterly than ever did she recur to the unhappy past. Could she only have seen him before she had met William ! that he alone might have received the full tide of her love !

One word, one caressing gesture, and she might have consoled and drawn her husband again to her side.

But no ! no word ! not a movement.

"Let this pass," he said after a long pause ; "do not let us revert to it in any way. I was myself to blame. I might have read the unhappy secret in your pale, tearful looks, and in your saddened air, so different from the blithe, gay manner of the Ethel I first saw at the Grange. My love for you blinded me. I can never hope to rouse from the ashes of your affections such a love as I had hoped to have possessed when I was ignorant of your antecedents. Remember, Ethel, in future, that as far as we can, there shall be no concealments. I am aware that it is much to ask from one who is unconvinced of the worthiness of her husband to re-

ceive her confidence; but still, to a certain extent I require it from you as my wife! And now do not let us mention this subject again. Time may enable me to forget it."

He took out his watch. It was nearly three o'clock.

He told his wife the hour, and asked her to retire. For himself, he should be busy writing for some hours, and did not wish to be disturbed.

Ethel moved away without a look or a gesture, lit her lamp carefully and with deliberation, and put away one or two things on the table with all the care and detail which one bestows on trifling objects when the mind is free and disengaged. Strange are the intricacies of the human mind! All this time her heart was filled with tenderness for her disappointed and unhappy husband. If he could have read it then, through that cold exterior, he would have been indeed comforted and encouraged; but Ethel was pale and cold, and then her tongue was tied.

"I shall not disturb you, Ethel. If I rest at all, it will be on this sofa, so good night."

He coldly went to her, and touched her forehead with his lips. He hoped as she left the room she would turn once, if only once, as she had done this unhappy day. But she did not; she softly moved to the door, opened it, and her white dress disappeared!

What disappointment for him! All day he had unconsciously clung to the hope that she would have received this differently, that she would have spoken to him in a more gentle, amiable spirit. He so loved her, that this deceit he had discovered could only partly alienate him from her.

He too was to blame; if he had come forward and made some concessions, how gladly would his wife have met him. But thus it is. Natures born to love and trust each other are separated, estranged by the simplest acts, and frequently by slight omissions only. There is a poisoned drop which taints and mars the whole.

For the time Lord Egmont had forgotten to name the meeting with his cousin to Ethel; in the overwhelming sorrow of finding her, as he

thought, more indifferent than he believed even, this other subject had been passed over, Ethel thought purposely, and she was too haughty to court any further confidence on the subject, so the moment passed.

Poor Egmont! how had his kind heart been torn by the sight of his beautiful cousin, in her miserable home, with her sick child; her absent husband skulking in holes and corners from the trackings of justice!

What a meeting between two beings, once so nearly united! He had followed the messenger to a back street, and was met at the entrance by the tall, emaciated figure of Caroline. She eagerly grasped his hand, and drew him into her one and only room. There, on a miserable bed, laid her child, groaning and tossing in high fever.

"Oh! Henry, that you should ever see me like this!"

His eyes wandered round the room, and at last fixed on her.

"Caroline, we meet again after seven years; how changed!"

(When last he saw her, she was youthful, smiling, lovely; now, emaciated, pale, and suffering).

"*I* am changed; *you* are not! Rightly so! You are good, oh! so good! I have been so ungrateful, so unworthy!"

She said this bitterly sobbing.

A cry from the child; she flew to it, held a cup of water to the little dry lips, and kissed the heavy, swollen eyelids; it again fell back on the pillow.

She returned to her cousin, putting her beautiful silken hair hastily behind the delicate ears.

His looks followed her, as in tenderness she bent over her darling, and watched eagerly its slightest movement.

"What can I do for you, Caroline? Tell me, anything, if only to show you I have not forgotten our—our—"

"Oh! Henry, I saw you to-day at C—— church. You were with her, who is your happy wife now. She looked so beautiful, so joyous,

as she turned to you when you touched her shoulder. I could not speak to you then, for she was with you. I felt as if I dare not intrude my worn, miserable looks on your bright joy. I found you out. You can again help me. Heavens! that my only friend on this weary earth should be the one I have so deeply injured!"

"Your husband, where is he?"

"Ah! there it is. I grieve to say it; oh! Henry, pity him, for my sake. Again he is in the utmost peril; he has gambled, alas! fearfully, and unless he can be got out of this country, Heaven only knows what will become of him and us! of my poor darling, the one ray of sunshine that has glittered on my miserable way."

And the mother flew to the bedside, and buried her head in the clothes beside her now sleeping child.

"There is nothing left us, no, not a shilling, and where Alfred is I cannot tell. He promised me to write, or come, but I have heard nothing; I am distracted with grief and terror."

Poor Caroline! who would have recognised in the agonized, wan looking being, the once brilliant and fascinating bride elect of Lord Egmont?

Her features, beautiful as they were, were so disfigured now by suffering; the look of fresh innocence gone. Her cousin found it hard to believe that this was once the object of his devoted love.

She told him how they had struggled. She said *they*, but she might have truly told the miseries *she* had undergone; how her home had been outraged by the miserable husband, who passed his days in the gaming houses with dissipated companions. How one by one every vestige of her former ease and luxury had faded away before the pressing, withering hand of necessity.

As she talked on and on thus, her companion lending his pitying ear, they heard a slight noise in the passage, and the door was thrown open and in stole, with a varying, uncertain step, a tall, large man. He carefully closed the door, and looked stealthily, though stupidly around.

"Alfred, is it you come back? are you sure it is safe?" and Caroline flew to the door, and bolted it again, to be sure it was secure."

"Me! yes, of course. Who should it be?" said he, with a coarse laugh, and he lifted up his face, and confronted Lord Egmont.

"Captain Franklin, it is a long time since we met," and he held out his hand with reluctance to the evidently half-inebriated husband of his cousin.

"A long time, my lord, indeed a long time. I hardly know how to thank you," and he put his hand drearily to his forehead, trying to recall through the mists gathered around the brain the occurrences of the past, and the amount of obligation he was under to Caroline's rich cousin.

"Alfred, let me take off your cloak."

He forgot his visitor.

"Nonsense, woman!" said he, savagely; "I came here only for a moment. I want money, and can get a passage to-morrow for America, if only I can bring the captain such and such a sum," and he named the amount.

"But, Alfred," whispered she, "you know I have it not to give, alas! and surely you would not leave me here to go to America alone?"

"Not to leave you? Hear her, my Lord Egmont," returned the husband, bursting into a coarse laugh. "Fancy a man lumbering himself with a sickly woman and child when bound for the New World! No, no, my lady, you stay here for a while, and when I have built you a log hut, and cleared you an acre of ground, then I'll send for you," and he waved his hat over his head in a faint and uncertain manner.

Lord Egmont looked on horrified. The poor wife sank her weary head on the little table, and shook it again with her sobs.

"Hush, Franklin, you distress your wife."

"My wife, poor thing!" and for a moment his look rested on her with remorse. "She has much to bear with from me; but we were both fools, she to lead me on, I to marry her when you, Lord Egmont, were—"

"No more of that," returned Lord Egmont

impatiently, "let the past be forgotten. I forgive you."

"It's easy to forgive when you are so much better off as you are," added the savage drunkard with a blow on the table which startled the wife and roused frantically the sleeping child, "you have a beautiful, young, and rich wife, I hear. Mine is neither one nor the other: which is best off, you or me? tell me that.

"Enough of this Franklin," said Lord Egmont, "tell me what I can do for you. I am ready and willing for her sake."

In time they extracted from him the name of the vessel; it was to sail that night. The anchor weighed at two o'clock. He could, if he embarked, be safe from the pursuits of the officers, and he tried to draw in bright colours his hopes, and reiterated his promises for amendment in his conduct.

Lord Egmont threw on his cloak and went at once to the harbour, there to arrange with the captain.

He left the miserable couple alone to make

a few small preparations for the voyage. When he returned he found the two sitting side by side, their child between them. The box lay ready packed at the door, and the last moments of waiting were passing away.

Who does not know the bitterness of those last moments? How the past is recalled, as the events therein enacted pass before the mind. How remorse and sadness mingle one with the other, how the time given us, for years seems to have been misspent, inasmuch as we have not gathered from each other's love the rich treasures which would console us in separation.

How we long, again and again, that we had better fulfilled our duties to those who are going; had better striven to be their help and comfort; and these moments slip away fast, faster, and still we recur to the past, with yet an eager desire to think only of the fleeting present.

And Alfred and his wife sat hand in hand; he sobered by the present sadness, she bowed down with grief. Their child was sleeping quietly on her arm.

Franklin was looking down on his only infant, and large tears fell from his reddened eyes.

"Caroline, I have been a bad husband, I know it, forgive me now! God help me, but I will try to do better. Cheer up, then, cheer up, my poor one; see if in a short time I will not write you to come to me with our boy, and then we will again begin life happily! and that good, kind Egmont he will take care of you, that best of men!"

Caroline could not say a word. Both bent over the child and their mingled tears fell on the little white frock.

"Promise me," at last she sobbed, "promise me to send for me, for oh! Alfred, you know I love you, and thro' all we have suffered together."

Lord Egmont appeared.

"We must go now, Franklin. I have arranged all! Here is a letter to read when you are at sea, and trust me, I will help Caroline and so will my wife, until you send for her."

How he pitied the unfortunate couple, now standing as man and wife should never stand in this life, on the brink of a long and unnatural separation. No longer to be each other's daily, hourly help, solace, and comfort! to look to others for sympathy, and to find companionship in other society.

"God bless you, my poor Carry, and my child," and the husband kissed both eagerly, the tears pouring down his cheeks, "and upon you, Lord Egmont, may God indeed shower blessings, for you are a friend to the friendless, and a help to the forlorn."

He tore himself away from his half-unconscious wife, who clung passionately to the child, as if to find comfort in its infant breast.

And so they parted! this once giddy, heedless pair, who had met as gay flies on the bright stream of youthful life, had together drifted down and down into wider, more troubled waters, had entered thro' the dark and narrow channels of the rocky bed, and, at last, were separated by the sweeping rapids and sharp rocks, when to

meet, or if ever? Perhaps again to confront each other, faded and withered, below the stormy passage, to glide again into calm waters, until at last, lost in the great sea of Eternity.

Lord Egmont saw his miserable companion on board the vessel. He returned to Caroline, cheered her with words of hope and encouragement, and promising to see her on the morrow, returned to his home.

When Franklin was out at sea, he opened the letter Lord Egmont had given him. It contained exhortations for amendment for the sake of his wife, for the sake of his soul!

He told him he would at once correspond with a house in New York, and transmit him a sum of money with which again to make a fair start in life, and might God prosper him!

CHAPTER VI.

THREE long years fled and gone! mourned by some whose joys have passed away, recalled sadly by others from remembrances of bitter trials and disappointments. Those three years have whitened Dr. Malvern's hair and added many a wrinkle to his brow. They have brought increased infirmity and unmistakeable old age on "Aunty." Even Lady Jane, the easy, luxurious Lady Jane has become more faded than you would believe possible with her much cared for appearance, and her studied toilette. In all, events as they have succeeded each other in the drama of life, have imprinted themselves ineffaceably on the characters, tem-

pering some to soberness and thought, hardening and confirming bad habits in others, leaving their sting in some natures, and their balm in others!

Arthur Clare's little house in Eccleston Street was not looking quite so bright and pretty as on the day when he and his Henrietta first took possession.

The curtains were somewhat faded, the carpet less radiant, and the ottomans and easy chairs with covers that had paid more than one visit to the cleaners and dyers.

Nevertheless, Arthur himself, as he sat in his little study, surrounded by Ethel's gifts, looked happy and contented. He had grown stouter, and is not now quite so natty in his dress, not so much the pink of fashion. He is reading the papers, and opposite to him sits his pretty wife working. Yes! this spoiled child of fortune is actually working at some really useful garment, of a very diminutive size. By her side is a pretty little bassinette, gay in pink and white lace, it has been brought down with its little

occupant, for mamma to watch whilst the one nurse takes out Master Arthur to the Green Park.

For more than a year now, a child's voice, that merry, innocent sound, had been heard up and down that narrow staircase, and in and out of the small house in Eccleston Street. How mamma, and even papa, watched for the little laugh at the hall door, how the study was always the first door opened for welcome; how Arthur's little hat was taken off and the fond parents gaze with looks of speechless love on their first-born. How they would interchange congratulatory glances when the little man came in, with unusually rosy cheeks for a London child.

This particular morning this programme had been duly enacted, and little Arthur, seated on his father's knee, enjoyed the full tide of his love and admiration.

"Really, my boy, you are a darling," said Arthur, enthusiastically, as he laughed in triumph at some peculiarly sagacious trait in his little

son's character, strictly speaking, due a great deal to his father's vivid imagination. "Now you must go upstairs to bed, and don't cry, my darling, and wake up little sister. Go and kiss mamma, and then off!"

And the youngster did as he was told, but came back again from the door, to take one more look at the cherub face hidden almost in the pink folds and curtains, and to snatch one more kiss from papa, evidently the grand object of the little one's love.

The door closed, and again Arthur took up his paper, and again Henrietta worked on and on.

Now and then he favoured her with a little of the news; sometimes political, but for this his wife did not seem particularly to care.

Births, deaths, and marriages had more charms for her, and in the silences and pauses, which frequently occurred, she looked at her sleeping babe, and as she plied her needle, thought with placid happiness on her lot, with a good husband and with, certainly, two of the sweetest, most

uncommonly interesting little children that ever blessed mother's eyes!

For Henrietta, in present joys, forgot her old habits, and gaieties; and frivolities had few charms for her now; her whole thoughts, and her few ideas were pretty well engrossed in her home.

Never mind, though the smart, clever lady's maid had subsided into the steady, hard-working nurse, or though it was impossible to re-furnish her drawing rooms this year, on account of the arrival of the little stranger sleeping at her side, who had by the way brought no end of expense, and very little to show for it, her papa declared.

Never mind all this, Henrietta was happier, merrier than ever she had been in her luxurious home, with no care, beyond the colour she should wear, or the partners who would or would not be at that night's ball.

"Dear me, Henrietta, listen, if that young St. John, Malvern's son-in-law, has not got that chapel in I—— Street, that fashionable chapel! I wonder why? I thought he was happily settled in Lincolnshire."

"So did I! Fancy Fanny in London. What will she do with herself, with her country tastes and habits."

"It does astonish me! but you know I never cared about that young fellow. He was priggish and absurd, and I know that the dear doctor was often nettled and put out with him."

"I remember. So he was, dear good old man! By the way, Arthur, mamma says that Ethel and Lord Egmont came up to town yesterday."

"I know," returned Arthur, "I know they were coming. Every one is anxious to see what Egmont will do. You know they want to get him to support that bill in the upper House, if only he can be roused and take it up, as he did that affair last year! What a speech he made! what a grand flow of eloquence, what pure philanthropy it was to which he gave utterance! I shall never forget it." And Arthur looked excited at the recollection, but his wife was not responsive. Her thoughts, evidently were much more with the stitching, and the little one for whom it was progressing!

Arthur went on dreamily:

"And Lady Egmont too was there in the gallery, hidden away, but I saw the tears on her cheeks when I went to congratulate her, but she begged me not to tell her husband she was there. Why, I wonder?"

"It seems most mysterious to me," returned his wife; "they are evidently devoted to each other, but their coldness of manner is very striking. I wonder and wonder more and more every day."

"I always told you, my dear child, that Ethel's heart was not in the marriage. Don't you remember the day before the wedding?"

"Oh, yes, I remember all that quite well; but don't you see that she loves her husband now?"

"No, I confess I do not, to the extent you assert. She cannot remain insensible to the goodness and the charm of such a man as Egmont, but the bright blush of her affections had passed away when she became his wife. It's no use arguing the matter, my dear; I am con-

vinced of it, as sure of it as that that sleeping babe is your child."

"Ah! well, then it is useless saying more," returned his wife, smiling, and looking at the little face to which her attention had been directed.

But Arthur forgot, even if he ever knew it at all, that women's eyes are quick to see much hidden from the harder, sterner gaze of the lords of the creation! A woman can discover in little acts, little traits, proofs of the inner feeling and the emotions of the heart, which a man may be witness to for long and long, and to which he remains insensible and ignorant.

Trust a woman to judge of the feelings of another! She seldom, if ever, errs, so quick is her observation, so intuitively does she grasp the hidden emotions and wayward affections of her sister!

So Arthur, with all his cleverness, and all his superiority, after all, may be wrong here, and his pretty, less gifted wife, be right for once.

Lady Jane entered, having actually walked at this early and cool hour to see her children.

She came in, with quite an eager look for her.

"Ah! dear, where is Arthur? Is he come in yet, sweet one?" she began hurriedly.

"Gone up stairs to bed for his two hours' sleep Lady Jane," returned her son-in-law, rising and giving her a chair. "I am afraid it is to him we owe your visit."

"No, indeed, Arthur, not so; but I own I was in hopes I should have been in time to have kissed the darling, for I have not seen him, let me see, for two days."

"Actually two days! Can grandmama exist without her grandson for two whole days?" said Arthur, looking kindly on his mother-in-law.

These two had been drawn greatly together by the birth of the little Arthur; both doated on him; both at last found ground on which they could meet, with no chance of disagreement or jarring. Both liked the other the more for standing in the relation they did to the

little object of their mutual love, almost adoration.

"Now, dear Mamma, look at baby pray; isn't she grown? isn't she improved?"

"Well, yes, really I think she is; but you know, dear! I don't know much about babies; but she is a nice wee thing, not like my boy though."

"You and Arthur make too much of that boy," returned Henrietta, half inclined to be vexed at the slights her baby was constantly receiving.

"Ah! my dear, such a child was never born to my belief," replied Lady Jane. "However, I must not get on this topic, or I shall never end: what I came to tell you is, that Ethel has been to see me. She wants us all to go to the Grange after the season for a month, and she is coming to see you to ask you. I wanted first to consult you, Arthur. I know the sea will be good for the children, and I long to see Arthur on the sands enjoying himself. I don't care about giving that concert we were talking about, but propose

devoting the sum I should needlessly expend on it to taking a house somewhere at Ramsgate, Brighton, or any place you may think best, and I want you all to come to me."

It was to Arthur she turned now, to Arthur, her much repudiated son-in-law!

"How kind of you, dear Lady Jane," returned he, fully impressed with a knowledge of the sacrifice she was making for them, and with the painful conviction that with all their economy he could not compass such a treat for his wife, his babe, and his darling boy.

"Oh! no, not kind to you, kind to myself you should say," returned she, with a pleasant smile. "I shall so enjoy it. However, let me tell you how I want to manage. I think we will take the Grange first, and then all go on to Torquay for the rest of the summer. What say you?"

"Say! What can we say but to thank you ten thousand times, Lady Jane," said Arthur, looking gratefully at her, "and that we accept, can you doubt, eh, Henrietta?"

And he arose and grasped his mother-in-law's hand and felt more kindly towards her than he had ever done.

Lady Jane was far less selfish now, much more engrossed with others than herself; the key stone to this improvement was the new-born interest in her grandson. Perhaps his coming, when the attractions of fashionable life were certainly on the wane, had put the finishing touch to the change which time was working on her character.

They were a happy trio just then, as they sat and discussed the summer scheme, and the spoilt Lady Jane discovered the grand secret, which one sometimes wonders people are so long in arriving at, that true and unmitigated happiness consists in conferring it on others. As the seed sown in genial spring tide is restored tenfold to the sower.

In another house in that crowded city another scene is enacted.

This time in Belgrave Square at Lord Egmont's mansion.

A splendid suite of rooms, furnished in the most exquisite taste, led to a small apartment opening on a conservatory. There sat Ethel Egmont, and by her side, with a more shaking hand and whiter hair, was our Aunty.

Poor Aunty! still with her knitting in her hand, and with some of her old energy, she is working at it by fits and starts, but oftener with it lying in her listless hands on her lap.

She was looking just now at Ethel—at Ethel, grown much thinner, much graver; elegant, distinguished as ever, but with far less beauty of health and youth.

Yet on her countenance dwelt more thought even than before, a sort of sobering or tempering which one sees on faces and expressions when the lapse of a few years has left its trace.

As she sat there leaning back in her chair, reading eagerly the morning's paper, she commands as much admiration as in her sunnier, brighter days.

"What is it, darling, you are reading so attentively?" said Aunty plaintively.

Her voice had grown weak and trembling.

"Oh, dear Aunty," returned her niece, looking up hastily, "just wait one minute until I have read this again."

Then seeing her dear old relative look disappointed, she quickly rejoined:

"It is about this question which engages so much time and attention, and for which they are so eager to enlist Lord Egmont's services."

"Why, dear child, what a politician you are become! Who would have supposed it possible?"

"Who could have supposed it otherwise, Aunty, with a husband like mine to keep up one's interest in the political world? Oh! I shall never, never forget that speech of his last year. How noble he looked! How grandly he stood, with every eye on him, and every head eagerly bent to catch each word!"

Ethel rose and paced the room.

"I shall never forget it again I tell you, dear Aunty. It was such a proud moment for me!"

"And what did you say when you congratulated him on it, my dear?" returned Aunty, delighted to see Ethel's interest so thoroughly aroused.

A change passed over her face, however, now. The brilliant expression faded; one of sadness, inexpressible sadness, clouded it over.

"I never speak of it to him, dear," said she in a low tone; "he never knew I was there."

She turned away and sighed heavily.

"But why did you not tell him?" Aunty recommenced. "Why keep it secret?"

"Oh, I don't know, dear," returned Ethel, quickly turning the conversation. "Here, do see, the Fairfaxes and the Merivalcs have come up to town! Shall you not be glad to see them? They have left cards yesterday, I see, to you and I must drive and pay them a visit."

Ethel managed to divert her Aunt's attention for a moment from the one subject of her husband, but she reverted to it notwithstanding.

"When will Lord Egmont be up, Ethel?"

"He said to-day," sighed Ethel again, "but

I cannot tell you exactly. You know he has so many engagements."

And she began again reading the paper.

A pause. Aunty's needles clicked with the old familiar sound, and the newspaper now and then rustled as Lady Egmont turned it over.

The morning wore on; the close morning and forenoon of a June day in London. The room was filled with the perfume of the flowers in the conservatory, and the distant rumble of carriages produced a monotonous and dreamy sound. Aunty's knitting fell gradually but surely from her withered hands, her head sank back, and she slept.

Ethel watched her for a moment, and then, too, her paper fell noiselessly to the ground; she clasped her hands, and her eyes fixed themselves steadfastly, sadly, on the face of her old Aunty.

She marked the change in the aged features, the falling of the mouth, the hollow temples, the hollow cheek, all, all telling of the great change that sooner or later must come. The thin hands, even as they rested idly on her knee,

showed the advance of the last foe, that foe before whom we wither long ere he is near, and who, when our time comes, sweeps us aside, and passes on heedless of the dearth and woe he leaves behind.

Such thoughts were Ethel's as she watched her Aunt.

"And when you are gone," said she softly, "who will there be to love me! Oh! my Aunt! my dear Aunt! my early friend!"

And tears coursed each other down her cheeks. She rose gently from her seat, and quietly drew down a blind opposite the sleeper, and again took her seat near her. She drew out a note from her small case, and read it again and again, for the fiftieth time, perhaps, that day. It was a very short note, but it seemed to have great interest for our heroine.

"DEAR ETHEL,

"I shall try and be in Belgrave Square to-morrow. Do not wait for me, however, but act as if I were not expected. I am going to

Richmond to see Caroline. No news of her husband, I believe.

“Yours ever,
“EGMONT.”

Yes, there it was! He was again with his cousin!

Ethel was hardly to be said jealous, for her respect and confidence in her husband were boundless, but she bitterly reflected that as his love for her waned, he was the more and more regretful of his early disappointment, and the society of his cousin recalled to him, she thought, the vivid recollections of happiness long since gone and past.

For, alas! since that fatal discovery, in the first few months of their marriage, coldness and distrust had grown up between them, as icy and impassable as that barrier which divides otherwise smiling and happy valleys!

Misunderstanding and misjudging, pride aiding in the work, Ethel and her husband maintained towards each other a cold and formal manner,

an indifference which belied the inner feelings of their hearts.

He believed her to be grieving still over her early love, to be looking on him, her husband, as the one bar to her happiness; he thought he saw this every day, in her cold, indifferent air towards him, in the careless good-bye when he left her, in the still more careless welcome when he returned. He thought he saw all this, and even more, so ingenious is the fancy in working for misery or happiness.

His manner, therefore, took the tone from hers. He too was frigid and distant, and Ethel was more than justified in the belief that he no longer loved her as he had done, that either her deceit had weaned his affections, or still worse, that the sight of his cousin had reminded him of early feelings.

Any way, she was miserable. Lord Egmont, cold as he was to his wife, having once determined on a more active sphere of life, was not again to be deterred by home disappointments, in the work he had set for himself.

On all sides she heard of his goodness and nobleness, she was a daily witness to the many acts which won for him the respect and love of his dependents and his neighbours; abroad as well as at home his praises were sung high, and his assistance and counsel courted in political life.

His energies seemed revived indeed, for no one was now more enthusiastic in bestirring himself, no one more determined to devote his powers to what ever purpose seemed destined to promote general good.

How kind he was too to Aunt; and how she adored him! But his wife, she felt daily, hourly the change! When others were extolling his goodness to them, his kindness, his forethought, she, who ought to have been the first to rejoice in it, felt a bitter pang of regret and disappointment.

One thing had hurt her more than enough.

On their return from abroad he had refused to take any part in the management of her estates farther than to help and counsel her in

any way by which she could be assisted and lightened of her responsibility. But it was the help and counsel offered by a friend, not assumed, as a right, by a husband. It as much as said, "I value nothing of yours, nor wish to lay claim to anything, if I have not your heart."

So in the coldest, but almost imperceptible manner, they withdrew from each other, and by outward attention and civility in society, hoped they were blinding the world to their domestic discord.

Ethel thought and thought of this until her heart ached again. At that time her husband was dearer, more beloved, than ever he had been. But her pride, that pride! held her back from acting as her good impulses urged her many and many a time; and when this fatal passion felt itself weakened, it took to its aid suspicion, and Ethel thought even if she permitted him at last to see how he was loved by her, he would lightly esteem the prize now, having met his cousin again, and revived his youthful fancy;

that perhaps he was chafing now at the bonds which bound him to her, and Caroline to her distant husband!

Overpowered by a variety of thought, she leant her head on her hands and wept silently.

Thus she sat, the much envied heiress, the beautiful Countess in her luxurious home, the wife of the most rising man of the day!

Her face was concealed in her long thin hands, jewelled as they are, and bitter, bitter tears are starting through them, and dimming the bright gems.

She did not hear a step on the soft carpet, a step which advanced and paused at the open folding doors!

They advanced again, and a hand was laid on her shoulder! She started up! It was her husband!

"Ethel," said he, in a troubled voice, "what is the matter? Why are you crying thus?"

How she longed to throw herself on his breast

to be taken to his heart as on the morning of her marriage, and to have told him all, all!

But the fatal recollection came across her that he had been at Richmond, to see his cousin; doubtless his pity only was with his wife, not his love, not his love!

She rose from her chair, took out her handkerchief, and hastily wiped her eyes.

"Nothing much the matter, thank you, only I am tired, and—and—"

"Nay, Ethel, tell me what it is," returned her husband, in a grave voice. "You know if I can do anything for your happiness, for your comfort, you know—"

"Yes, I know you are very good, very kind," here she paused, and looked at her Aunt. "I am very unhappy about Aunt; it was looking at her, as she is now, that made me sad and gloomy; I think her so changed."

Lord Egmont looked at the old lady.

"Yes, she is changed certainly; but, Ethel, she may be spared a long, long time to us; do

not be so unhappy," and he again placed his hand on her shoulder.

This trait of kindness, and even tenderness, touched Ethel, and quite overcame her again. She burst into a paroxysm of tears, and her sobs seemed almost to choke her.

Had the time come then when her husband could not draw her to his side, and comfort and console her?

Yes, alas! it was so. He believed himself to be utterly unloved by her, and though his heart yearned towards her, he dared not do more than speak some soothing word, and add a kind, but cold caress.

So this moment passed away, one that might have reconciled and cleared off difficulties; which, like clouds, shut in their horizon, and excluded the light of peace and happiness! alas! for the pride of the one and the misunderstanding of the other!

Oh! human nature, born to suffer and to toil, that so many of our worst trials should be

self-inflicted, and so inflicted, bearing the most bitter poison !

And Aunty awoke from her sleep to find Lord Egmont seated in Ethel's chair, and reading Ethel's paper, his face to all appearance calm and unmoved, but no guide to the heart which beat below.

CHAPTER VII.

"DEAR boy! come in now it is so hot. Rest a little in the shade, and in the afternoon mamma and her darling will walk on the hill, and see the pretty blue river."

"And go in a boat and sail, too?"

"Yes, perhaps, if cousin Henry will take us, but Alfred must be a very good boy, and do as I tell him now."

And Caroline Franklin took her little son in her arms, stroked his pretty bright curls, and looked straight into the deep, clear blue eyes.

The little one was tired and hot; he had been running on the tiny lawn nearly since daybreak, gathering the flowers, chasing the butterflies,

and basking in the bright, hot June sun. And now he was weary, and the little eyelids drooped over the sunny orbs, and the arms relaxed and fell by degrees powerless by his side. His mother watched him attentively and fondly, and at last laid him gently down on the sofa, which stood near the window, and through whose muslin curtains the soft air stole in.

It was a pretty little cottage near Richmond, not quite within sight of the broad Thames, but still within an easy walk. She had rooms here for herself and child. She had tried London at first, but she had seen her precious one droop and fade in the close streets, so she had left it, although her whole thoughts and her one anxiety apart from him was to be as near as possible to the spot where she must hear of her husband first.

For three long years had gone away, and only once had she received tidings of him.

He was going into the interior of the vast continent. He was well and hopeful then, said he would write again, but his life would now be

a wild, an uncertain one; she might not hear for some time, but she was to trust. Mind to trust, for good resolutions had, he faithfully believed, taken firm root in his heart; not such resolves as had fled by before, but strong and hearty ones, accompanied with a humble conviction of his own powerlessness to keep them unaided.

In the long, long nights on the wide ocean, when the busy crowds were sleeping below, he had paced the decks in silence, the moon lighting up the waters, and beneath the deep repose of the starlit sky. Then had deeper, purer thoughts passed through his mind; a sense, too, of the presence of his God! his God, who was leading him over this vast expanse to a land where he might yet redeem his past, blessed with His guiding hand!

He thought of his wife, his child, he might say his forsaken ones, dearly beloved, precious though they were.

Often the rough old seaman at the helm would watch the lonely man pacing up and down the

broad decks, and then sinking down on a bench hide his face with his trembling hands.

"Some great trouble has come over that poor soul," he would say, as with pitying eye he gazed on the bowed and stricken form.

It was a long letter, a dearly prized one. It had never been followed by another, but still Caroline watched every post, believing that she should hear, and nothing seemed to daunt her. Not the frequent disappointments or even the grave face of her friend, her cousin Egmont.

This day again the postman had passed. No letter! but after the first pang her mind had again risen buoyant. Perhaps this afternoon's post would bring it, or Henry might bring it, or at all events the next morning would.

And so she went on and on, rising again and again, as the grass uprears itself after the passing footstep has crushed it downwards.

The boy still slept, and the mother worked and thought, her imagination carrying her to the new country, the wild scenes, in which she

pictured to herself her husband toiling and working for her and his child, she trusted.

At one o'clock the sound of a horse's hoofs was heard coming up the lane. They stopped at the little white gate. She saw Lord Egmont dismount and give his bridle to the groom, and then she watched his air, tried to see by the brightness of his look, or by his eager, quick step, if he was the bearer of good news to her.

But, no! he came up the narrow walk with the listless, gloomy manner that had grown upon him wonderfully lately, and she felt he had nothing for her. Her heart sank; but then this afternoon's post!

She opened the door, and he stooped to enter the little low porch clustered over with roses and honeysuckles.

"You have heard nothing, Henry?" were her first words.

"No, nothing, Caroline. I wish you would not be so hopeful. If ill news comes at last, it will be so sad a shock," and he looked at her pale, anxious face with a sigh.

"Impossible, Henry, I must be hopeful. I am sure the feeling is given me by a good Father, to help me through this time of sorrow, and bitter suspense. I am sure I shall hear of him, I am sure he is alive and—and—well, I cannot divest myself of the conviction, presumptuous as it may seem. No, God grant it! I shall see him again, my Alfred, my husband!"

And she clasped her hands and bowed in prayer.

Lord Egmont looked at her; a pang of envy crossed his mind. If only his wife could have loved him so.

A few moments and then Lord Egmont spoke again.

"I think, Caroline, you will be better for change of air, and a diversion to your thoughts. I want you to go to Egmont for the summer months. You will not mind the loneliness, and and you will like all your old haunts, and you can show Alfred all the things that delighted us as children. What do you say?"

"Dear Henry, you are so kind and thoughtful, but has not Ethel told you that—"

"Ethel! What of her?"

"Why, she was here yesterday, spent an hour with us, and walked on the hill. She said you were going to Scotland and elsewhere, and would be away for months, perhaps; and she asked Alfred and me to go to the Grange and be with her—"

She paused here, she felt the awkwardness of telling Lord Egmont of his wife's invitation; it betrayed, alas too clearly, that a division existed between them.

He felt this too, but through his chagrin shone forth a gleam of pleasure, that she should have been so thoughtful and kind for his poor cousin and her child.

"I am very glad of this, Caroline. It will be better for you than being alone at Egmont. Ethel did not name it, perhaps she was not sure you would come?"

Caroline did not reply, but she remembered

how pleased Ethel had seemed by her ready acceptance of her invitation.

"You cannot think how kind Ethel is to me. Not a week passes but I have flowers, vegetables, or some delicacies for Alfred, from the Grange, and she sent him these pretty frocks, yesterday, too, dear, kind Ethel!"

How Lord Egmont's eyes brightened as he listened to his cousin, but why did he sigh so, as she paused?

To Caroline it was a mystery.

She felt sure that both husband and wife were deeply attached, but what was this cloud which hovered above them, and shut out the bright knowledge of each other's affection?

Alfred awoke, had his simple dinner, and then Cousin Henry and his Mamma took him in the boat and they floated over the bright waters and into the deep, rich shade by the banks, and he watched the flies gliding down the swift current, and the fish leap and capture them.

He was abundantly amused, and the mother and her cousin talked gravely and calmly. And

then they came home, and Lord Egmont rode away, and the tea tray was set under the shade of the apple tree, by Alfred's especial request. And, alas! the afternoon's postman passed the white gate without even a glance at the little cottage, embowered in roses, with the expecting, anxious face peering forth from the rustic porch.

The house in Belgrave Square was ready, and the preparations complete, for the reception of a gay and brilliant crowd.

Ethel stood dressed and radiant in jewels. She was in her drawing room, alone, for "Aunty" could no longer undertake a long dinner party, and an evening one also, so reserved herself for the hour of half-past ten, when a crowd of fashionables were expected, but amongst whom, gay and beautiful as some were, she was never tired of watching and admiring her niece.

Ethel was this evening standing by a fragrant basket of flowers; in her hand a note, yet unopened.

She had not seen her husband for more than

two days. His late hours at the House had decided him on having his own suite of apartments, so as not to interfere with her in any way; indeed, at the Grange and at Egmont they had by degrees adopted this habit, so merely met occasionally, and at meal times; hardly ever else.

Whilst she was thus standing waiting, he came in—her husband—he looked round the room and saw she was alone.

“Ethel, you here alone!”

And he advanced and took her hand kindly.

She gave it to him readily, and it would have lingered in his but for his dropping it almost at once.

“I wanted to tell you I have seen Caroline to-day. She is so pleased and thankful for your kind invitation to the Grange. But why did you not tell me of it?”

“I hardly thought it could matter to you, my lord, as you said you were to be absent for some months this summer.”

“But it pleased me to see you so kind and

thoughtful. You have not seconded my efforts for her before this," added he bitterly; "I hardly expected it now."

"Being your cousin was sufficient, my lord, to make her welcome under our roof—my roof, I suppose I must say."

Lord Egmont looked at her curiously; her face was turned away. He could only see the graceful throat and the small head, with its pendant blossoms of clematis; he could not see the trembling lips and the tearful eyes.

He rose and walked to the farther window; stood looking out on the Square, and watching the carriages as they fled swiftly by. He strolled now to the conservatory, and gathered a lily of the valley, which he fastened into his coat. All this while his wife was following him with her still tearful eyes, longing to be by his side, securing the flower for him as was her custom in the happy days now years ago.

It seems strange and improbable to some that such estrangement should have arisen between two hearts really devoted to each other. Mis-

understanding succeeding on deceit had laid the foundation. Pride strengthened it, and habit had reared the superstructure, gradually and surely becoming stronger and firmer.

They had retired so completely from each other that to gain mutual confidence was become an impossibility. Nothing could now accomplish it but some sudden and unlooked for event, which would shatter this barrier, and reveal in all their barrenness and repugnance the evil feelings which had kept them both so long asunder.

Lord Egmont returned to her side.

"I saw a friend of yours to-day, Ethel; he is in town for a time."

"Ah, indeed, and whom?" returned his wife listlessly.

But he had no time to reply, for the doors were thrown open, and Mr. and Mrs. Fairfax were announced.

Ethel advanced and greeted her old friend. His wife, wonderful to say, was no less a person than Thomasina.

Thomasina grown very much thinner, more

refined, better dressed, much quieter in manner. Jemmy wondrously improved, with actually an air of independence as he led his wife forward.

"My dear Ethel, how glad I am to see you again," began Thomasina; "but you don't look so well or so radiant as you did. Does she, Jemmy?"

"Lady Egmont must always look charming in my eyes," returned the little man bowing.

"That is so kind of you, Mr. Fairfax," said Ethel smiling.

Lord Egmont was busy talking to his cousin, and Jemmy and Ethel sat down together.

"Now tell me, Lady Egmont, how do you think Thomasina looks? Do you say she looks happy; or bored, or miserable? Tell me truly."

"She is certainly improved in looks, and certainly not bored. Happy I should say."

"If only I make her as happy as she does me. What a woman she is, Lady Egmont; as grand in mind as in body. I assure you even my father says she is a nearer approach to his

grandmother than any one he knows. She quite rules him, and me, too, for the matter of that, but I don't object if it makes her happy. You know she must be obeyed. You remember her in Italy, what slaves she made of us?"

"Quite well; but still I daresay you are not without your will, too?"

"No, for she will insist on my having my own opinions and keeping to them. I was so unused to this, as you know, Lady Egmont, but she always gives me a reminder if I give way to my father, by saying, 'But, Jemmy, you said so and so, and of course you mean it,' and of course I do. Don't you see, Lady Egmont?"

And he smiled one of his old half silly smiles, for Jemmy, though a good little body, was not much wiser than before he married his strong-minded wife.

Thomasina came over to Ethel as Lord Egmont walked towards Mr. Fairfax.

"Fancy! two whole years since we met. How we have travelled! And you, Ethel, you have been quite quiet, I suppose in old England,

one not gifted with superhuman genius, transformed into a gentle, loving woman, with tears in her eyes as she spoke of her husband, simple and inferior as he was.

“What changes, almost incredible, do we see in characters,” said she to herself.

Mr. and Mrs. Merivale came in with Lady Jane and the Clares. In a little while the rest of the guests arrived, and a general buzz of conversation filled the rooms.

Lord Egmont could not help looking at his wife, as she performed the part of graceful hostess, moving from one to the other, with her gentle, winning manner.

A gentleman talking to him watched the direction of his eyes, and smiled to himself at Egmont's being still in love with his beautiful wife. Three years of marriage had not disenchanted him!

At last dinner was announced, and Lord Egmont was called away, and withdrew his gaze regretfully from the figure of Ethel, as she rose to marshal her guests.

... as if it were a... of con-
sacred... the usual ceremonies
... her... whilst
... remarks of a
... her right

... the clubs,
... who was to
... her head swam.
... almost refused to listen.

"But, Mrs. Fairfax, is Lady Mervyn ill?
She looks very different to what she did," whis-
pered Mr. Merivale.

"No, I think not; but I never believe town
agrees with her," returned Thomasina, as she
anxiously scanned Ethel's face.

"It's something more than illness though,"
added he, with an attentive look. "I see her
cheek pale and wan, and a restless glance in her
eye. Yes, I suppose, like the rest of mortals,
she has discovered that happiness is a delusion
in the married state. We expect too much at
first, Mrs. Fairfax; some minds are more readily

consoled at this discovery; others fret and chafe, and make themselves miserable."

"If you mean that Ethel is not happy in her marriage, I think I may say you are mistaken," returned Thomasina, warmly. "Such a husband as she has can never disappoint the highest expectations."

"You think so," with a supercilious smile; "but, nevertheless, I see she is not so happy as she was, and I think I can prove it to you now—"

"No, no! indeed, I do not want any proving of what I believe does not exist; besides, it would make me no happier to be convinced. Why, what on earth can be wanting? Rich, beautiful, and beloved! Who would not envy her lot? What can be required more?"

"Simply one small ingredient—love!"

Thomasina was out of patience, she would listen no more; but still this wily, cold tongue had caused her to think and ponder. Certainly Ethel did not look so well, or so happy; then she had no child, perhaps that disappointed her.

Any way, she would watch and satisfy her mind.

Mr. Merivale had become more and more absorbed, and his heart was yet more rugged and hard.

He was quite tired of his poor little wife now, and he wanted to try her living nature by his cold indifference and even rejection.

For he now had expected that Mr. Merivale was a attendance. In the time it seemed to absorb all his thoughts, his time, and he bore with unconcealed impatience the requirements of custom, which compelled him occasionally to be seen in his wife's society, which he evidently felt to be tedious and insupportable.

His heart was, however, far too cold to be deeply engaged by anyone, and poor Augusta took this for her consolation; but whilst the fancy lasted he was as devoted and absorbed as the most intimate of lovers: it amused him, and filled up his idle hours! Perhaps after all that was the extent of the mischief, but it weaned by degrees surely his wife's love, and

awoke in its place a ghastly contempt and abhorrence!

"We hear this report confirmed about you, Lord Egmont," began Lady Jane; "are you really going on this embassy?"

"I can hardly refuse, Lady Jane, and fear I must leave home for a time. Indeed," added he, sighing, "I am glad to have anything in my power to do, when I can fulfil my duty."

"I am sure, my lord, you have been most valuable at home; why then go abroad?"

"I have been requested to do so. I don't see how I can refuse. Indeed, have no inclination to do so."

"But Ethel! How does she like the prospect?"

"Ethel? she knows nothing of it," and a cloud passed over his face. "I have not named it to her. I do not go until November, you know."

"But will she like going?"

"I have no intention of asking her to do so," returned Lord Egmont, gloomily.

Lady Jane looked aghast! What was the matter? What could be the reason?

The prosy man at last had hit on a subject of interest to our heroine. Her husband's praises!

"This session over, and he will embark on his new career of duty to his sovereign," continued her companion. "We shall miss him sadly, but this mission requires head and temper, and discretion, and all this he enjoys most fully."

"How do you mean? I hardly understand," faltered Ethel.

"Is it possible you do not know that Lord Egmont is going out Ambassador to ———?"

The words had died away, and the old man was continuing the subject, when he raised his eyes, and was aghast at Lady Egmont's death-like face and closed eyes.

He hurriedly called for a glass of water, and half rose to assist her, but Thomasina caught sight of her friend at this moment, and came round to her assistance. The guests looked

round in consternation, and Lord Egmont hastily advanced and helped Thomasina to remove his wife from her chair to the window.

No air revived her. Still she was insensible, and no one to see his face of deep tender love and anxiety could doubt but that he was a most devoted husband. He had no eyes for any one else, and could only gaze in bewildered anxiety on her pale, colourless features.

He lifted her in his arms, and followed by Thomasina, carried her to her room.

There, in her gay dress and glittering ornaments, she laid helpless and death-like. They chafed her hands, and by degrees the colour returned to her lips, and in a few moments she was able to speak, and thank them tearfully.

She saw her husband's anxious eye, and closed hers again wearily. She felt his clasp on her hand, and she heard his kind, gentle voice.

Her heart sank within her as she thought that even this consolation would soon be withdrawn from her, that she would soon cease to hear him or see him even.

Lord Egmont returned at last to his guests, leaving his wife with Thomasina. He took her vacant chair at the head of the table.

"I hope Lady Egmont is better, my lord," said Mr. Merivale; "I am afraid the heat overcame her. I saw she looked pale. I was speaking to Mr. Fairfax of young William Dillon's coming home at the time, and when I turned again she was leaning back in her chair—fainted!"

Lord Egmont said nothing, but a spasm crossed his features, and the prosy, talkative old man, when he ought to have spoken, said nothing!

CHAPTER VIII.

THE next day Dr. Malvern, the good, kind old Doctor, was in Belgrave Square.

He was always a welcome visitor to Ethel and to her husband, and his observation, quickened by his love for both, was not slow to perceive that something was amiss between these two.

He longed to speak to them, and at times the words were on his lips, but were restrained, for kind and affectionate as Ethel was, there was still that something about her which forbade any allusion to her position as regarded Lord Egmont.

Her old friend for a long time had noticed the coldness of manner each bore to the other, but

he could also see the eager, animated look the wife wore when her husband was praised, or when his counsel was sought, and he also marked the tender, affectionate, loving glances that followed Ethel when Lord Egmont thought himself unobserved.

How the good old man conned the matter over and over! How he longed to say to them, "Why this coldness when your hearts are in reality so united?"

He felt now assured that Ethel had forgotten her early trial, and that she only thought of William as the playmate of her youth; that her memory no longer lingered on the brief period of blind happiness, and the subsequent misery which followed the renewal of her acquaintance with him three years and a half since. He felt quite sure of this, otherwise he would have been still more pained at the estrangement between the husband and wife; he might have attributed it to a cause which he knew now was groundless.

But how to proceed he knew not. He dreaded interference, and yet his loving heart yearned to

reconcile the two beings in whose happiness he took such deep interest.

For the poor doctor had, truth to say, been disappointed in Fanny's marriage. He found so much that displeased him in his son-in-law; his simple, heartfelt piety was so different from the argumentative, doctrinal strain into which St. John threw himself, and he was besides grieved to see the tendency to which his Fanny's husband was leaning.

St. John was now in town, and it was curious that Dr. Malvern should have proposed going to Ethel in preference to his daughter, but they said nothing, nor did Ethel, but they thought not the less.

William, too! he was to be in town, and his guardian was anxious to see him once again. Their correspondence had waned and waned, year by year, and it was now nearly expiring.

Dr. Malvern hoped to renew his influence if he could but meet with him.

So he was come up, partly for business, partly for pleasure, and Ethel and Lord Egmont delightedly welcomed him.

Our heroine seemed herself again this day, and they were dining quietly and rather early, as she was to go to the opera.

It was Saturday night, and Lord Egmont was free from his duties; but he had made no proposal as yet to accompany his wife, but her companions were to be Jemmy and his strong-minded Thomasina.

They were a quiet quartette, then, this evening, and were listening to Doctor Malvern's tidings from home, of the Grange.

"I am sure, Lady Egmont, you will be the better for going there, for short a time as you have been here, you look very poorly," added her old friend.

Ethel laughed nervously, and her husband looked at her anxiously.

"Yes! indeed I think she does too much up here, my dear doctor. You do look ill to-day, Ethel. Why go to the opera?"

"I could not disappoint your cousin and Mr. Fairfax, and indeed I feel as well as I usually do," she returned in a low and subdued tone.

Something in the mournfulness of the voice

struck her husband. He looked at her again searchingly.

“Have you a seat in your box to-night, Ethel? I should like to go if you have.”

The start, the heightened colour, the look of surprise and gratification, hurried as it was, did not escape the doctor's eye, but her reply was much colder than he could have believed possible from his dear, loving, affectionate Ethel.

“I shall be too glad if you will come, my lord. We have a spare chair in the box.”

Lord Egmont sighed, but acquiesced, and after dinner Ethel's cloak was brought down, and followed by him, she entered her chariot, and they were whirled away, leaving Auntie and Dr. Malvern tête-à-tête.

The old couple adjourned to the cool, fragrant conservatory, and there they sat talking over their old stories, and reaching atlast the most interesting of all the topics, Ethel and her husband.

“I am not quite happy about Ethel, Mrs. Marsdon; I think she looks ill and saddened. Why should she? Can you tell me?”

"I hardly agree with you," returned Aunt; "she seems to me happy and contented, but certainly she is not so blithe as she used to be."

And the old lady ruminated.

"Mind, Mrs. Marston, what I say to you is in strict confidence; don't as much as hint it to Ethel. But I am strangely misled if she and her husband do not misunderstand each other; why or wherefore God only knows, but they are not on the happy footing I could wish, and I cannot tell you how it grieves me."

"You frighten me. I see nothing, but certainly it is strange too that until this morning I never knew Lord Egmont was going on this embassy, and I am nearly sure it was a surprise to Ethel. Good Heavens! what can it be?" and the old lady looked wildly and hurriedly at Dr. Malvern.

"Have you any idea, my dear Madam, if there is any disagreement between them on any one subject?"

"None, to my knowledge; he is all goodness and kindness, and she never names his name to

me but with expressions of love and respect. No, there can be nothing, I am sure of it; dismiss it from your mind."

But he did not, and could not, and for him was unusually silent and uncommunicative this evening; and Aunt, were she disposed to be quick-sighted (which she was not), might have gathered from his abstraction food for fresh uneasiness.

In the mean time the husband and wife had reached the opera-house. The box was yet untenanted, and they were alone; the overture was beginning, and the house not yet filled.

Lord Egmont took the seat opposite his wife, and as he looked round the tiers, now beginning to look bright and gay, thought how beautiful she looked, and yet how fragile; he felt half frightened as he marked her thin cheek and her slight frame!

He was sure he was right in leaving England alone, not exposing her to the annoyances, the many inconveniences of travel, and a residence in a foreign land.

And yet he felt uncomfortable too at the idea of having accepted the proposal without consulting her; but then, if she had only cared for him—only cared just one half as much as he did for her!

And tears actually stood in his eyes as these thoughts fled in his mind, fast as clouds through the heavens.

When Ethel turned, she saw his face of tenderness. It awoke a thrill of happiness in her heart. What if after all she might go with him. Go wherever it might be, gladly, willingly with him.

He saw her start, he marked her blush, but at the moment the door opened, and Jemmy and his wife came in.

And the evening went on, and the music was more exquisite than ever; the house filled to overflowing, and crowds of beauty and fashion thronged the boxes.

Many a glass was directed to Lady Egmont, for she was lovely, and the acknowledged beauty of the season. But she sat pale and heedless,

and if her eye wandered at all from the stage, it was to cast furtive glances at her husband, as he sat grave and abstracted, at the back of the box.

The opera was over, and a general move made.

Jemmy took his wife's arm, and Lady Egmont came out on her husband's.

They were a very striking pair: both tall, and unusually distinguished looking, and no one could fail to remark their appearance, as they slowly moved through the crowd.

Certainly not one who was watching them attentively as they neared the entrance to the crush-room; his eye followed their every movement, and lingered long and abstractedly on the pale, changed, though beautiful features of Ethel.

Yes, she was indeed changed since those happy days; he called to mind those days when they rode together over the breezy moors, or wandered over the yellow sands, to the sound of the rushing waves.

How strangely did these memories contrast with the scene of the present moment.

The gay, brilliant, noisy crowd, the heated atmosphere, in place of the music of the waves, and the pure air of the rocky shore! Ethel in her glittering dress and pale features, to Ethel in her summer hat, and buoyant, joyous glances.

Three years and a half! Could it be possible that that brief time could have worked so great a change.

And so he thought and watched, and the crowd slowly passing by, brought the objects of his attention nearer and nearer. When quite close he was half tempted to move away, but no, he would stay and meet her, see her soft eyes, once again hear her gentle, loving voice, and feel the touch of her hand.

And Ethel came on, leaning on the arm of her husband, with pale and listless looks, gazing far beyond the crowd which blocked up the entrance, and as she advanced she turned for one moment, and there, close beside her, almost

touching her, was William Dillon, her early friend, her first love!

Coming thus unexpectedly on her, it would have been wonderful had she been betrayed into no feeling.

Survive as we may the bitterness or the joy of early events, there is yet a something about them which clings to the nature, and which is never lost, long as may have been the period which has elapsed since first we had our whole being, our thoughts absorbed in them, or however subsequent passages in our life's history may have partially effaced them. Still they own a certain sway over us which we can never wholly throw off; it will travel with us to our graves!

And so it was with Ethel. In a moment of time rushed in an overwhelming tide the recollections of her trial, and the image of William Dillon awoke in her at once a vivid remembrance of what he had once been to her, though he was nothing, nothing now!

And she looked so startled, and turned still

more and more pale, and her voice so shook, and her hand so trembled as it rested on her husband's arm, that it would have been more than could be expected from him, if he had not sighed with the bitter confirmation of his suspicions that her first love still survived in her heart.

But he pitied her, and pressed her arm to his side as he addressed William, and tried to cover her embarrassment at the meeting.

How his wife adored him at that moment for his goodness and unselfishness, and how strong she felt, as leaning on his arm, she listened to William's well-known voice.

For the tones, familiar as they were, now that she was recovering the first hurry of their meeting, were listened to with calmness and pleasure, for they could now awake no thrill in the heart once so loving and devoted; that heart was now in truth another's, and another's only, and that one was her noble husband.

William was altered, too; also grown older, graver, but still the same fascinating manner; still the same beautiful eye and winning smile.

But he had lost the brilliant freshness of youth and happiness, that bloom as easily swept away from human countenances as the soft down on the butterfly's wing. Once gone, though it may leave its traces, it is never restored.

Lady Egmont at last found her voice.

"When did you return?" she began.

He did not answer for a moment. It seemed to bewilder him, the sound of that voice.

"Only two days since. I am here for a time, a month or so, and then I return to Germany."

"You know dear Doctor Malvern is with us now. I hope you will come and see him and—and—us."

He did not reply. Whatever change had come over her, he felt himself unchanged. The very first sight of her recalled all his bright day dream, and awoke all the happy, blissful memories, which could never have been said to have entirely slept.

The crowd now began to move on again, not before Jemmy had renewed his acquaintance with the formidable Dillon, and introduced him to Thomasina.

"Who do you think was that hero?" said he to his wife as they whirled away home in their brougham.

"What a glorious face! What a truly handsome man, Jemmy! Who was he?"

"Why William Dillon."

"William Dillon! and who may he be?"

"Why no less a person than Ethel Egmont's first love," returned he with emphasis. "You know I told you about him, but you have forgotten his name."

"I had, indeed. And was he really and truly Ethel's first love?" added Thomasina in a low tone.

"Yes, and Egmont's rival. He was not the only one he had," rejoined Jemmy, with a conceited air. "I rather have an idea that if I had proposed a little before, I might not have been your husband, my dear Tommy, which I am sure I should have regretted."

And he attempted to take her hand.

But she was pettish, and out of temper with his little conceits, though they were fast dying away under her strong-minded influence.

"Nonsense, Jemmy, I am not going to believe all that. You know very well that Ethel would never have had you. She and I are of quite a different mould. Not her beauty or her wealth makes the difference, but a something which would have made you insupportable to her, but which does not operate with respect to me. I am altogether an inferior being, I assure you."

"Nothing of the sort; I consider you much more to be admired than she is. Beginning with her looks: she is so pale and sickly-looking now, and has lost her nice laughing, jolly ways, whilst you are ten times handsomer, ten times pleasanter than ever you were."

And Thomasina listened with not an unwilling ear to her husband's praises, and at last they reached the house on the gravelly soil in Hyde Park Square, to which the Fairfax family still adhered, out of respect for the prejudices of the old Baronet.

CHAPTER IX.

THE first meeting between Ethel and William was now over, and that to which she had looked forward with dread and a certain nervousness, she now reverted to with comparative indifference. On the numerous occasions on which they met in the giddy rounds of London gaieties, they encountered each other to all appearance as comparative strangers, and no one to overhear their conversation would believe but that they had made a recent and casual acquaintance. They never reverted to the olden days, when each had been to the other the sunshine of life; those days when time flew, and they had no fear of to-morrow.

William was listlessly seated in his lodgings one Sunday morning quite late.

The church bells were pealing here, there, and everywhere, and the streets wore that faded and desolate look common to a London Sabbath.

The shops all shut, and an air of dull respectability pervading the pavements, as troop after troop followed to their respective places of worship.

No green fields to pass, fragrant with new mown hay and summer flowers, over which float in soft music the sound of the welcoming bells! No clear sky into which to gaze, and to remind one of the great and good Being we are hastening to worship! No songs of birds, no busy hum of insects!

Nothing but the hot streets, the dull, dull tramp of the crowd passing on and on, and the various peals mingling in discord with the monotonous, never-changing scene of brick houses and scorching pavements.

William, too, sat dull and listless, gazing out on this scene with sad heart, his usually ani-

and delight to himself, cheered on by the approving fiat of patrons and connoisseurs.

And he was come home now, with some of the results of his labours, and hearing of William being in town, he had sought him out, for he had never forgotten the hero of his boyish fancy.

"My dear Dillon, how are you? I am so delighted to see you! The years since we have met!"

William shook him warmly by the hand, and seemed particularly relieved by his manner.

"I should never have known you again," returned William, as he looked at him from head to foot, and observed how the stripling of sixteen had grown into the tall, athletic, and handsome young man. "You remind me of your mother, and—and—of your sister."

"Do I! Then of course you are pleased to see me," returned Bernard laughing, for he saw Dillon's hesitating and awkward manner. "I know and have heard all about your entanglement (shall I so call it?) with my sister, and

how fortunately you both found out in time that you did not suit, so sensibly resolved to break off an engagement likely to be no forerunner of happiness."

William's face brightened; he was so rejoiced to see young Bernard take this view of the case; he little knew that the brother and sister had carefully corresponded through late years, and that the former had been a faithful confidant and adviser, and had warmly concurred in the decision which had separated his friend from his sister. Much as he loved and admired them both, he had the good sense to see neither suited the other, and were most unlikely to prove each other's happiness in wedded life.

William made him come and sit down near the window, and he ordered more coffee and more toast, and there, comfortably ensconced opposite to one another, they prepared themselves for a good chat.

It was curious to see these two young men, both so young, so few years between them, but yet so marked a difference.

Youth, health, hope, and happiness cast a brilliant hue over Bernard's countenance; his eye glistened with fervour, and his cheek flushed with excitement and pleasure.

For William, we have seen how he looked, how faded, how gloomy; and although seeing his favourite had brought a gleam of pleasure to his face, it soon again relaxed to its habitual expression of sadness and disappointment.

"And of your family, Bernard; tell me, is your mother well and busy as usual?"

"Yes, truly as usual the best and most bestirring of parents. I spent three weeks with them a little while ago, and was quite a boy again, in my old haunts. Of course you know about Ellen?"

"No! indeed! What of her? I have not had a line from Mrs. Bernard for months."

"Indeed! Then this is news I suppose," laughed Bernard gaily, yet he looked straight away into the street as he added: "she is going to be married very shortly to that grave Dr. R——, who has been settled at Heidelberg

some time now; he is a very quiet, placid man, very superior; my wonder is he chose such a rattle as Ellen, but she seems really very happy, and he looks at her, as she utters all her nonsense, with eyes of admiration and approbation, and he settles quite down there now, so my mother will always be near her during her life time, so you see it is a very good thing altogether."

"Very good indeed," returned William drearily. No man likes to hear the woman he has once even thought of is engaged to another. No matter how little he cared for her.

But it was hardly this that touched him then, it was the bitter feeling that all around him were happy and prosperous, and he alone miserable and hopeless.

He said no more, and his visitor seemed to be busily engaged in pouring out some coffee. After a pause, William continued:

"And you are prosperous I hear, and engaged in some grand works. How little I thought it

when I used to see you with your bits of clay, sitting in the old room at Heidelberg, modelling your figures, your limbs, your heads out."

"I always determined to be a sculptor. Thank God! for once in this life I have not been disappointed. I live wholly in my art, have no earthly wish beyond. But I had a sad time, a fearful probation at Florence! Never shall I forget it, the blackness of disappointment then."

He almost shuddered, but then shook off as it were the weight of the recollection, and smiled his joyous smile.

"But never mind, it was the dense cloud which passed, and revealed a bright day, a day, I thank God, that has shone without a cloud since its dawn! I can never say what I feel for Lord Egmont."

"Lord Egmont! Was it he, then?"

"Was it! Have you never heard the story?" and forthwith he launched into the whole history; his penury and obscurity, from which he had been rescued by his patron; the generosity which

had smoothed his after studies, the ceaseless encouraging letters he had received, the good advice and help in all difficulties Lord Egmont gave him.

Tears rose in his eyes, for the mere mention of his patron's name called them forth, straight from his grateful heart.

Then, in all the fervid language of a true lover of beauty, he described Ethel, as he had first seen her. The beautiful, graceful, gentle, Ethel; as he went on, her image, though seldom absent from William's mind, was re-called with ten-fold force; he saw her again, as Bernard's words poured forth, the Ethel of the old Grange! the lovely Ethel, as when he saw her in her womanhood, in her home, shedding happiness and light at her every step!

"Say no more, say no more, Bernard!" he interrupted; "it is a subject I can hardly enter on; let us change it!" And he hurriedly rose from his seat, and paced up and down the room.

"Why, did you know her then, William," returned the young artist, as he looked surprisedly at his friend?

"Good God! is it possible you are not aware —? No, no! of course not; how should you? unless your sister had told you. But not so again, she promised she would not."

"You bewilder me! What should Ellen know? She never named anything to me."

"Then I will tell you, Bernard," in a thick hoarse voice. "Listen! listen to me, and find some excuse for me. It will do me good to pour into some ear my life-long misery."

Bernard was shocked at the pale, agitated face, and the hurried manner. He said nothing, but watched as Dillon sat down opposite to him, quickly putting aside his long hair from his forehead, and clasping his hands fixedly together, so long and so thin now!

"You do not know that I have a long, long acquaintance with Lady Egmont. The first person I can remember almost is she; all my childish amusements include her, when I recall them to my gloomy mind. They seem like bright pictures, passing before me, shrouded as I am now in hopeless gloom. I went away to

Heidelberg, and three years past quickly. The young man seldom recurs to his boyish, childish days; they return as he grows older. New scenes, new associates, effaced for a brief space then my early recollections, and by the time I was two-and-twenty, I had very little thought for the coast scenes of Devonshire, and my play-mate. Then, Bernard, it was I became so intimate with your family. I never remember a mother, alas! for me, and your mother, in her gentle, kind ways, helped me much during that wild time. Ellen, your sister, was pretty and innocent, and I liked to see her moving about and brightening your home. I thought to myself, if I could share mine with her, I must in time be good and happy as herself. I do not believe she thought about me, indeed I am sure she did not, for when one evening in the old garden I asked her to be my wife, she looked scared, and for weeks after would only speak to me when her mother was in the room. This determined me more and more, and I went on perseveringly, and at last she said yes, hesi-

tatingly, doubtfully. You know your mother disapproved, and I was sent away for three years to test the strength of my attachment."

He paused, sighed heavily, and clasping his hands over his forehead, seemed to be living only in the past.

"Your sister is now happier in a worthier man, so bear with me whilst I tell you how truly I justified the wisdom of your mother's decision respecting our engagement. I came to my guardian, the good old Rector, after I had parted many, many months from you all, and I intended to have told him all I had not written to him. Oh, that I had! Well, I returned to the old haunts, and there I found my early friend, my playmate Ethel, such as you saw her first at Florence. Days passed, and I thought myself safe. I believed what I felt for her was merely the regard of an old friend; at least I tried to think so. The remembrance of my engagement, coming like a bitter pang over me, ought to have convinced, but no! I shut my eyes to all this, and went on week by week, until at last

the fatal truth burst on me. I was engaged to one, and oh, misery! loved another! If I had had only the courage then to have told her, but I did not, and when the truth came to her ears, the bitter scorn I received from her! the haughty looks! From that morning until two weeks ago I never met her again, but if ever one human being's image haunts another night and day, night and day, untiringly, unceasingly, hers does mine! God help me!"

"You pain me, William! my dear William! do not go on! I can imagine the rest You told Ellen, and she gladly released you, and—"

"Yes, I told her all. I almost believe then if she had taken me, worthless as I was, her purity and goodness would have won me to her, but of course she released me, adding that I was not to distress myself on her account, as she had never particularly fancied me! Comforting that—eh, Bernard?"

He smiled a faint and wintry smile.

"But she is married now—Lady Egmont—and happy, is she not?"

"Yes, I believe it, happy and prosperous. There was always that in Ethel that must love and revere goodness and worth like Lord Egmont's, and I firmly believe she is a devoted wife. But I must leave this subject; I have told you all now, Bernard. You can pity me, and, like Ellen, your sister, you can forgive me."

"I feel for you deeply, most deeply. To love one like her and be disappointed is indeed no mean trial. God give you strength to bear with this, and greater if he sees fit to send them to you!"

"Greater! that can never be. Thanks for listening to me, so weary, so lengthy as I have been, Bernard. I tell you all this, as you are Ellen's brother. You have a right to expect it."

"But now," rejoined the brother, "you must exert yourself. Shake off instead of dwell on these bitter memories; indulged in as they are, they will be fatal to your career. You must rouse yourself; determine to battle with your trial, and rise superior to it."

As he spoke his eye rested on the languid figure and the wasted face. He thought now how changed he was. William had leant back in his chair, forgetful of his visitor; his eyes were closed, and face resting on his hand.

The open window gave admission to sounds of many footsteps, and Bernard looking out, saw the same groups as two hours and a half since, only now they were returning, as before they had been advancing.

The churches poured forth their gay crowds, and the streets were for a brief half hour filled by the gay dresses and smart costumes of the London season.

Out of one came good old Doctor Malvern, seemingly much out of place in the crowd descending the steps of St. ——'s. On his arm was Ethel, and walking by her side was Lord Egmont. For a long time not one spoke.

Something prevented Ethel talking as usual to her old friend, and to judge by the countenances of all three, more discomfiture than pleasure was the prevailing feeling.

For that morning they had attended St. John's church, crowded as it was, with fashionable London ladies, a sprinkling of men, and with the aisles pretty well choked with a patient and expectant crowd. Dr. Malvern had seats in his daughter's pew, and when he and the Egmonts arrived there, Fanny was in the corner, and the organ was beginning the symphony ere the service began.

Well conducted was it. The singers well chosen, and the hymns and psalms were solely performed by them, not by the congregation, yet no one could find fault with it; indeed, every one praised and declared the music and the preaching at St. ——'s was far superior to that of any church in London!

The long service over, and the Doctor saw his son-in-law ascend the pulpit stairs. The brief prayer said, the fashionable crowd settled themselves into comfortable attitudes, prepared to enjoy their usual Sunday morning's treat.

There is a something about the popular preacher, quite different from the simple, quiet

curate to whom the doctor's only child had engaged herself years ago.

An air of assurance and self-confidence and even of affectation which made the father-in-law turn his eye away, and sigh.

The sermon began. No one but must admire the eloquence, the elegance of the imagery, and the well-turned phrases. The voice, too, so well modulated and carefully studied, and the attitude and look of the preacher so expressive of devotion and piety. Indeed, every now and then, as the tones fell and a more than usually beautiful passage was concluded, there might be heard a sort of rustle of dresses, and a perceptible buzz of admiration, common as an accompaniment to the last few notes of a popular song warbled by a favourite opera singer!

The preacher kept his elegant congregation well entertained for the greater part of an hour, and as they all flocked away, exchanging whispers expressive of their admiration of the preacher, they felt for the time as pious, and as good, and as well satisfied, as needs be.

The doctor listened with downcast eyes, so did Lord Egmont and his wife; Fanny never once raised hers, until the conclusion, and when indeed the organ had given forth many bars of melody. Even then she hardly looked at her father and friends, but hurriedly bade them adieu, and disappeared into the aisle, leading to the vestry, where her husband is waiting to take her home.

Ethel and her companions went to Belgrave Square; there, in the drawing-room, was Aunty, just come down from her room, for she was getting quite an invalid then, and kept late hours in the morning. With her were Jemmy and his wife, who had also been at St. ———, but being nearer the door, had escaped earlier from the crowded, heated building, and with the familiarity of old acquaintanceship, had called in on their road home to see Mrs. Marsdon.

"Where have you been then, to church?" said Ethel, as she returned their greetings.

"Where?" returned Jemmy; "why, to St. John's. My dear sir," turning to Dr. Malvern,

"let me congratulate you on your son-in-law. I never heard a finer preacher, or one that seems so great a favorite every where."

"Ah! indeed," rejoined the doctor, shortly. "I'm much obliged for your congratulations, my dear sir. I hope he may be doing good. I hope he may."

"Doing good! Why, of course he is. Didn't the Dowager Lady Grandall declare she almost had a mind to give up her Sunday singing parties, and not take a drive as usual in the parks on a Sabbath."

"But *did* she?"

"Well, no, she hasn't yet," returned Jemmy, discomfited, "but I daresay she will. And then there's Thomasina, didn't she tell me she had never heard a finer piece of rhetoric? Didn't you?" addressing his wife.

"Yes, I did say a finer piece of rhetoric, certainly," she replied, with meaning.

The Doctor looked at her; he saw at once they agreed, and he would have dropped the

subject, but the dense little Jemmy, thinking it an agreeable one, determined to continue it.

"Now, Lady Egmont, were you not delighted? How that man works on one's feelings! How wicked I felt at one moment, and then how pleased with myself that I did feel so! Altogether, I never was better lectured to my fancy, eh! Lady Egmont?"

"Well, I think I will suspend my judgment awhile. You know, Mr. Fairfax, I am a little disposed to like quiet churches in the country, simple congregations, and simple sermons, so you must not expect me to be very rapturous. But I tell Dr. Malvern how universally his son is admired in the metropolis."

"Yes, yes, I know all that, my dear Lady Egmont," broke in the Doctor, rather impatiently; "don't let us talk any more of it. I hope he does good, and if he does, God forbid I should find fault with the means, because they may not be exactly to my liking."

Lord Egmont rose from his seat in the win-

dow; he went up to his wife; he looked rather disturbed.

"I am going out of town directly," said he, "and shall not be back, I fear, for some days. You will be going to the Grange, I suppose, at the end of the week, so perhaps I had best join you there?"

"Is anything the matter—anything wrong?" and Ethel turned pale.

"No, nothing in particular. Why do you look so frightened, Ethel, so pale? Here, take this water," and he seized on some standing by Mrs. Marsdon, and anxiously looked at her as he handed it to her.

"No, I am not frightened, only—only I thought it might be something about your departure altogether for the Continent."

"And can that so much matter to you, Ethel?" and he sighed, as in quick passage passed before him, her cold manner, the indifference, with which he had been treated, as he thought, by her.

"Of course it must matter something, my

her heart, was gone, with the sense of her coldness and indifference on him. She flew to the door, but only to see him bidding good-bye to the Doctor and the Fairfax's in the hall. This done he ran up-stairs to see Aunty, and in a moment more was in his brougham, whirled away, and leaving Ethel motionless on the threshold of the library door, her ear keenly sensible to the receding wheels, and her heart sinking lower and lower as she felt he was gone!

CHAPTER X.

"AUNTY, I am going to drive down to Richmond to-day to see Caroline. It is so lovely, and there is such a cool breeze even here in London, what will it be out there? Doctor Malvern is coming, and I am to drop him at the river side for a row, and you and I can go on to the cottage. What do you say, darling?"

Aunty seemed pleased at the idea, so the barouche was ordered, and the three rolled away out once again of the dusty streets into the fresh, delicious country.

"How pleasant this is!" exclaimed Aunty at last; "it revives one."

And she sat up in the seat, and seemed thoroughly to enjoy the change.

"You look fresher and brisker to-day, my dear madam," said the Doctor, as he arranged her cushions for her. "You will be all the better for this glimpse of green fields, and this breath of pure air."

"I shall, I think. How lovely it is!" she repeated, as she gazed on the blue sky, over which in quick succession scudded the light gossamer, summer clouds. "How good is God! How much pure enjoyment he gives his creatures, a brief foretaste of heavenly things, a sort of glance into the futurity of brightness and never-ceasing joys!"

There was that in the old lady's tone of voice and in her pale face which made Ethel tremble. Day after day some new but slight evidence of the failing strength and dying powers of her dear old relative; the tone of her mind, too, was undergoing a perceptible change, a happy, peaceful one, to awaken joy, not sorrow, for who so blessed as those whom their Lord is preparing by gentle degrees for a blissful and everlasting rest and peace?

But Ethel, nevertheless, with the feeling of loneliness about her, could not endure the bare idea of a separation from her old relative, and she looked at her fixedly with anxious, enquiring looks.

"This world is beautiful, indeed, indeed, yet what is it to that to which we are all hastening?" mused the good Doctor.

"Nothing! I feel that! I am sure of that! and I have no regrets for it. I have had a happy, a peaceful life of late years, and though God has sent me my troubles, yet they are not without fruit, I pray. I have nothing to wish for now! I see my child married to one of the best, the most perfect of men. Life is very, very short! A few brief years, we shall, God grant it, meet again! Why, then, should I wish to live longer, to become an anxiety, a burthen to others?"

"Not so! not so! darling, dear Aunt! You could never be a burthen to me! What should I—oh! what should I do without you?"

And Ethel could not restrain her tears. They

coursed each other in quick succession down her cheeks.

“My darling Ethel, how can you say what shall you do, with such a husband as you have to love and comfort you?”

At that moment Ethel would gladly have poured all her woes into the sympathising ears of her old Aunt, whose nature, quickened and yet softened by her approaching change, she felt was never before so nearly the friend she had long needed, to comfort and advise.

But the good Doctor was there, and she shrank from naming her husband before him, so silently clasping her Aunt's hand they sat and watched the passing scene with a peaceful sorrow at their hearts.

The carriage deposited the Doctor by the landing-place at Richmond; crowds of boats gaudily painted, and with gay awnings, lay ready for hire, or floated down the shining river, filled with happy passengers. Some lazily reposed beneath the spreading boughs which, overhanging the water, cast a rich and

luxurious shade, and here and there moored in the centre of the stream, were the fishing punts, with patient occupants watching the many coloured floats which floated immovably this day on the clear mirror-like river.

Promising to take him up again in two or three hours, the ladies went onwards; and then Ethel told her Aunt she feared some bad news for Caroline, that Lord Egmont was gone to enquire into it; and that she was going, by his desire, to prepare, in some measure, the poor wife's mind.

"Poor soul! is it so bad then after all her sorrows? I think, Ethel dear, I will rest at the Inn, whilst you go on; I shall only embarrass both, for, alas! I am very useless."

"Hardly useless with your kind sympathy, and ready help, Aunty; but I think perhaps it will best as you said."

So she desired the servants to stop at the Inn, and when she saw Aunty comfortably on a sofa by the window, overlooking that beautiful

view from the height of the hill, she went on her melancholy errand.

The carriage drew up at the cottage gate. There, on the little grass plot, played the boy, and there, in the porch was the mother's anxious face.

As Lady Egmont descended she was met by Caroline, who with eager steps came down the pathway.

"Lady Egmont! Ethel! you look pale and anxious; have you any news for me? bad perhaps? If so, tell me at once," and she clasped her hands together beseechingly.

"No! no! you are too hasty, Caroline. I have nothing to tell you, either decisive of bad or good. Come, let us go in, it is so hot here; but first let me kiss Alfred. Why, what a fine fellow he grows;" and Ethel stooped and fondled the boy, whilst his mother looked on sadly, murmuring, "this fearful suspense."

By degrees Ethel won her to go into the little parlour with her, and drawing down the blind, she seated herself by her on the sofa, and

with her soft gentle tones, calmed and soothed the troubled spirit of poor Caroline.

Ethel's manner was always perfect, but to see her to the greatest advantage was when consoling and helping those in distress.

Her utter forgetfulness of self, the genuine feeling and enlarged sympathy with which her heart was filled, welled forth in irresistible words of hope and solace.

Caroline was sensible of this, and experienced the blessings of so gentle and sincere a consoler. Save Lord Egmont she had no one to whom to open her heart, and to speak to on the one subject, from which her thoughts seldom wandered. She felt the want of one of her own sex now, for when the one friend, the husband, is gone, and his cheering words and fond looks are heard and seen no more, woman turns to woman for consolation and encouragement.

And by degrees Ethel broke to the anxious, miserable wife, the tidings, uncertain as they were. She told her all her husband had said; how that he thought the information far too

vague to be depended on, how that he bid her hope still, yet that it was right to be prepared for the confirmation of the intelligence; and this might arrive any day.

Poor Caroline! how calm now; was it that unconsciously to herself, she had been looking for such tidings?—almost expecting them, knowing the wild uncertain existence Alfred must be leading, and from the silence that had so long existed; or was it that she clung to hope, and felt a strange feeling of security that all would be well still, and that they should meet again.

She received the intelligence with a cold fixed gaze; not a tear rose to her eyes, but she, holding Ethel's hand tightly in hers, sat and thought—and thought.

Her cousin let her so remain, showing only her deep sympathy by the increased pressure of her cold hand, or by a gentle kiss on her pale face. And so they sat, side by side, on the small couch, with the bright sun piercing the blind even; and seeming to lighten up the room and the mournful figures in mockery.

"Oh! Ethel! this a just punishment for me. God forgive me now! for I have suffered bitterly. And you, Ethel, fortunate wife; to love and be beloved by him; happy, thrice happy, is your lot."

"All have their trials, Caroline; yours are great, but I am not without mine. But do not let us talk about mine. I came to see you and hear of you alone."

"Alas!" sighed Caroline, "my thoughts too much dwell on myself and my sorrows." With an effort she roused herself and looked at Ethel anxiously; "Tell me what sorrows can you have, rich in love and hope, young, loving your husband, and being beloved by him."

"Ah! there it is," cried Ethel, thrown off her guard, her spirits weighed down as they now habitually were; "there it is, *am* I beloved by my husband?"

"Are you; can you question it? Good Heavens! what can have happened that you should doubt?"

Ethel looked at her cousin, her clear blue eyes shone on hers in all truth and purity.

"Caroline, I committed a grievous injury on him when I married him—a great fault—a sin you may call it. I became his wife when my affections were another's; any way, I engaged myself loving, and revering his worth and goodness, but not with that love I owed him. Promising to be his wife, I ought to have confided all to his good, generous nature; but my besetting sin, pride, prevented me. Sorely am I punished, for beginning at last to be thankful and joyful I was his wife, and recovering from the dream which I had thought so bright; he discovered my deceit, my treachery, I may say. Since that day oh! Caroline, he has never been the same to me."

"You astonish me, Ethel! and he loves you so deeply, so devotedly. I know it, I have seen it in a thousand instances. Does he doubt your love for him?"

"God only knows! My pride has few dregs left, but—but I cannot own in so many words how I love him, when my whole life is embittered by the knowledge that he no longer cares for me. His words are so cold, his caress so

formal, and as I live, I would die to serve him?"

And the slight figure was bent down on the sofa, and the agitated face hidden in its pillows as sobs broke forth.

"My poor Ethel! dear cousin, don't sob so; take comfort."

And a kind touch rested on the silken hair.

"You mistake, indeed you do! Henry loves you tenderly. Some fatal misapprehension exists. Clear it up, Ethel, clear it up, as you value the short happiness any of us are permitted to enjoy on earth. To think he, too, should suffer! he so self denying, so good, so generous!"

Ethel turned only a too willing ear to comfort like this, and as Caroline heaped one on another evidences of Egmont's love for his wife, the clouds which rested in deep shadows on her heart seemed dispersing and melting away, as the mists overhanging the earth are scattered by the rays of the sun.

Long she listened, and much was she comforted.

At last she said to Caroline :

“Forgive me ! I have wearied you when at this time your trials press hard on you. It may console you somewhat to know your words have proved worlds of blessing to me, for I have been miserable, indeed. At one time—oh ! Caroline !—I thought that, disappointed in me, his heart was yearning for his first and early affection !”

“Not so, Ethel. His love for me was never the deep, matured love he gave you. You of all women are most suited for his companion in life. Now, dear Ethel, listen to me ; trifle no longer with brief moments of happiness. When next you meet say at once, candidly, honestly, ‘ Husband, why this estrangement between us ? I have forgotten my early dream ; I remember nothing but that which revealed my deceit to you. Forgive me ! I do love you, deeply, faithfully !’ Say this, Ethel ; comfort his loving heart ; be to him the wife he deserves. Now promise me, will you ?”

"I will, indeed I will," said Ethel; "what should I care if he said but one loving word, such as he uttered so often before that fatal day? A thousand blessings on you for all this, Caroline! You have removed a weight as of lead from my heart. God bless and help you! and give you strength and courage for all trouble. . . Whatever happens, remember me as your firm, faithful friend, one who will be with you in all if so permitted. I know you will not come with me to the Grange now, and we leave town to-morrow. I dare not keep Auntie here any longer; she is already paler and weaker than she was."

"No, dear Ethel, I would rather be here, where the first news will reach me. Bad or good, it is best to hear it without delay. I should only fret and chafe away; but I thank you warmly. Now good-bye," and she kissed her once, twice. "Remember what I say to you, and let me see you and Henry the happy husband and wife you should be!"

Ethel, with many backward looks to poor

He looked up bewildered, hardly conscious if he was hearing aright. To be near her, to hear her voice once again, not in the short commonplace sentences of every day conversation, but in quiet and undisturbed interchange of thought was too great a temptation. He acquiesced, and in a moment more was seated before Ethel, Ethel looking more pale, but more lovely even than when first he met her on his return from the Continent.

They talked all of them of his plans. He had received an offer of an appointment in a distant but most unhealthy colony. It had great advantages pecuniarily, and he said (in a sad tone) he had nothing in England to attract him. He would rather be up and doing, and a fresh country, new duties, and a total change would do much for him.

The Doctor argued greatly against it, and seemed half to convince him, and wholly to satisfy the others, but wearied with his long day, he at last leant back in the seat, and the four rolled on in silence.

It was a beautiful evening; the dew as it was falling, returned to the air a fragrance, an odour of fresh hay and of summer flowers. The sun setting, cast long shadows of trees on the shining fields, and bathed in glory the wooded hills.

On such another day, Ethel and William remembered they were together; on that day, of mingled bitter sorrow and joy, how well Ethel, recalled each moment of it; how completely she lost herself in its recollections, and when she casually glanced at her companions, how impossible was it to believe how years had fled, and how changed was all about her. There was Aunty, and there the Doctor, and there William and on the same road, on just such another soft summer day were they thus travelling.

In life, as we proceed, with never lagging footsteps, how often are we startled by a similarity of positions, a sort of coincidence of events! We pause a moment, and wonder how it can be; we shake off as it were the train of circumstances which encircle us at the time, and

for a brief, brief moment realise what is gone and past for ever ! When we awake again, what a misty, uncertain dream seems life, only here and there, like the summits of lofty mountains up-rising in a sea of clouds, do we recognise, and identify the leading features of our departed days, unable to recall that which intervenes !

The silence was unbroken. Ethel sat quiet by her Aunt's side, and William, with eyes fixed on the landscape, and with compressed lips opposite to her.

They rolled on. The doctor said he would resume his arguments on the morrow, and composed himself for a nap : the shadows deepened, and the air became more and more balmy, and Ethel at last roused herself from her reverie.

"Why are you so bent on this appointment, William ? What is there in it that is so attractive to your fancy in a distant, unhealthy, and unlovely country ? What is there to induce you to give up home, country, friends ?"

"Can you ask, Lady Egmont, what have I to induce me rather to prefer this country," re-

turned he bitterly. "My life is a sorrow, a burden to me; one period of happiness have I known, I shall know no other. I would rather then weary out my life in some new country, where I can forget the past, as I see others do; and yet," in a gentle voice, "I do not altogether wish to forget it."

Ethel did not reply, nor did she see the sad look with which he uttered these last words.

"You are young, talented, and can command something better than this. Have patience, wait until something more suitable offers; be persuaded."

"Persuaded! Yes, Ethel, by you, if I thought you cared for what befel one so unworthy, so wretchedly unworthy."

"I must care," rejoined Ethel, in a soft voice. "I do not forget my early friends, nor am I unable to recall that you were my playfellow, my first friend out of my own home. I do care, and would willingly persuade you to abandon this rash scheme."

Her soft voice, and gentle, persuasive manner,

overcame William; his voice faltered. That she should still feel an interest in him, was beyond his hopes.

"It is a long, long time since I have heard a kind tone, or felt that any one cared for me. I have led a lonely, cheerless life, Ethel; a just punishment for me, perhaps, but a bitter one. In having deceived others, I alone reap the chastisement. Thank God for that! Others are happy and have forgotten. I alone suffer; it is right it should be so!"

Again, for the second time that day, Ethel's voice rose in accents of consolation, and again were they irresistible. As they fell on William's ear, his harder, disappointed nature softened, and through the darkness around him he caught glimpses of some bright rays, that might yet gladden and brighten his days.

They had reached London, and were now for a moment stopping at a chemist's shop for some medicine for Aunty. Ethel, though looking pale and sad, was still talking in a low voice to William, and he, bent forward, was gazing on

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her with an expression of untold love and reverence, for she seemed to him now a purer, higher being than ever. Lost to him in this world, she could yet encourage and console him, and point to better, more hopeful days.

A brougham just then drove up to the same shop, and some one alighted and entered it. He took no notice of the barouche, but ordered something at the counter, and whilst it was being prepared he walked to the door.

He looked at the carriage by the pavement, and made two steps towards it, then paused; there he saw William with his enthusiastic gaze, and there he beheld Ethel's earnest absorbed manner as she bent forward in speaking.

A pang crossed his heart; he rushed back to the counter and taking his parcel, would have hastened away, but the footman standing by the barouche caught sight of him.

"It is my Lord, I think, my Lady," said he.

"Lord Egmont!" returned Ethel, eagerly; "he did not see us. Run, George, and tell him to come back," and she leant forward anxiously, and William drew back with a chill.

"Lord Egmont returned indeed, but slowly, and with a cold, stern manner.

Aunty roused herself up in astonishment to see him there; and the Doctor looked enquiringly at him. For Ethel, something seemed to paralyse her tongue; she could not speak now that he was at the carriage door. The lamp-light shone on his face, dark and stern.

"Have you just come from Caroline's? Good evening, Mr. Dillon. Did you find her tolerably well?" turning to his wife.

"Yes, as well as we could hope; but—but you; how are you here? I thought you were at Liverpool."

"Did you? no doubt! but I found I was obliged to return by the first train this morning, to find the Captain of this vessel. Most vexatiously, I find he transacted his business to-day in London, and is gone again. I have been home for an hour, and am now on my way to the station again; and, indeed I am in a hurry. I trust, Mrs. Marsdon, you are not very tired, and you Doctor, adieu. I must be off." He coldly shook hands. Ethel leant out

and called to him to allow her to accompany him to the station; but either he did not, or would not hear her, and in a moment more he was gone.

With what a cold and crushed feeling did his wife sink back into her seat, as the sound of the departing carriage struck on her ear; it was such a revulsion of feeling, after her buoyant hope, to part with him again so icily, so forbiddingly. She forgot her companions, and William as he watched her as the flashes of light from the lamps shone on her face, needed no further conviction that her whole heart and thoughts were devoted to her husband.

Deeply as he felt this, and all that he had lost, his reverence and admiration for Ethel rose in proportion. He could never look on her for a moment but as the pure and beloved object of his early days.

CHAPTER XI.

UNDER the shade of a group of beech trees, resting on the lawn of the Grange, were a tolerably large party. Mrs. Marsden in her garden chair, with her knitting; near her Lady Jane, calling her attention to the frolics of her little grandchild, who, with his mother and father were playing a game of romps on the velvet grass. There sat Thomasina at a little distance, with her work, and by her side Jemmy, reading the leading article in the Times, on which she gave her opinion, and which he, carefully avoiding a remark, patiently went through with very doubtful enjoyment; but it was a duty that came with each morning's post, and was not to be evaded, and by degrees he was

beginning to have some notion of politics in general, and taking the colour from his wife's more enlarged mind, became less bigoted and narrow viewed than when he accepted, on trust, the paternal opinions.

It was a lovely afternoon; the flowers were in their most gorgeous bloom, and the sea looked blue and sparkling between the hills and woods.

As the party sat enjoying themselves, and basking in the soft air, Ethel was seen advancing up one of the walks. She was talking to Dr. Malvern. Her soft blue muslin dress and the delicate lace which trimmed it, became her well. She had her hat in her hand, and in her waistband a freshly gathered bouquet of crimson roses; as she neared them they all involuntarily watched her. She was eagerly discussing something with Dr. Malvern, and quite unconscious she was so near her friends.

Arthur looked at her with even more than his usual admiration; she was so graceful, so lovely, in her simple morning dress, amidst her flowers.

"Do see Lady Egmont, Henrietta," said he, pausing, and holding his boy in his arms; "does she not look beautiful, and so eager too. I wonder what her conversation can be about."

"Nothing that concerns us, depend on it, Arthur; so now give the little man another toss, and don't be looking so fixedly at Ethel, and making me jealous."

"No fear of that," returned her husband; "but does it not strike you that she is much happier, more at ease these last few days; more in spirits altogether?"

"No; I have not observed it; she is always calm and contented, as far as I can see."

"Ah, you are so much wrapped up in the nursery, you don't care to look beyond; now I do, I see a great change"

And it was true. Henrietta, like many a woman before her, was altogether absorbed now in her maternal interests. Everything but her husband and mother bore a very subordinate part in her thoughts; hers was not a mind capable of a very extensive range of sympathies

and general ideas, and all she had were occupied in her immediate home interests. Ethel was altered, and Arthur was quicker sighted this time than she was.

At this moment the little Arthur burst from his father, and ran to his favourite Ethel; she stretched out her arms, and caught him in them, and disengaging the flowers from her dress, showered them on the boy, who in rapturous delight crowed and laughed, with his little fat hands outstretched.

Aunty looked on with a half pleased, half regretful air.

"I wish, Lady Jane, my Ethel had children like Henrietta's. It is the only thing amongst all others, most wanting to complete her happiness."

"Yes, it must be a great disappointment to both of them; they have none, and with all their estates."

Lady Jane took a far less exalted view of the subject of good Aunty's regrets.

Ethel did indeed look both lovely and happy

to-day, and now they advanced altogether, she with the boy still in her arms, and clinging round her neck.

"Let me take him, Lady Egmont, he is so heavy," interposed Arthur Clare.

"No, not at all; he is but a wee man, are you darling?" returned Ethel, looking at him with fond eyes; "and we are going off to ask Cresswell to show us the new fowls; such beauties. Dear Aunty, are you quite comfortable, and not too hot? See, here comes the tea for you all! You know it is already five. The Doctor and I have had such a long talk about parish matters, that I have quite lost all idea of time. Come, Arthur, boy, let us be off."

And with a happy smile she proceeded, leaving the Doctor with the party.

The men servants now placed a folding table under the trees, and spread on it the tray, with delicate cups of fragrant tea, and silver jugs of rich cream. It was the custom at the Grange to enjoy this refreshment out of doors, in that weather, and at that season.

The party gathered about it, and became even more sociable than before.

"This friendly cup of tea always reminds me of my mother," simpered Jemmy. "She always used to have some at five, and I went always to her at that time, and told her all my woes, and all my dilemmas and (don't be jealous, Thomasina) all my little love affairs."

"Few enough of those I should think," rather scornfully laughed his wife.

"Ah! you don't know that, my dear," and Jemmy, winking mysteriously. "There was one very serious; I have got over it now, I assure you; but you had a narrow escape of not being Mrs. Fairfax, I can tell you."

"Ah! indeed! Tell us how, pray," laughed the Doctor, who dearly loved a joke.

"Ah! Clare knows," returned Jemmy, looking at him. "It was he mostly that put me off, and prevented what was nearly happening."

"Don't be absurd, Jemmy," said Thomasina. "Who do you think cares now anything at all

about your love affairs. Not I, don't flatter yourself."

Jemmy was quite pleased to see his wife a little excited; he took it into his head she was jealous, and thought it would be a nice little bit of excitement to tease her.

"Well, I never tell tales out of school, Fairfax, so your secret is safe with me," said Arthur, as he held up a sprig of heliotrope, with a meaning smile.

Thomasina got up and walked away. Jemmy eyed her receding form, and then whispered mysteriously to the small circle:

"I will confess I was once in love with the fair mistress of these domains myself, and had it not been for the precipitate declaration made to her at Egmont, I rather suspect, instead of sitting here, Thomasina's lord, I should have been the husband of the heiress of the Grange!"

How they all laughed! They believed he was more than half in joke, and the good Doctor enjoyed the fun vastly.

Thomasina returned at the merry sound.

"What is amusing you so, good people?" began she, with a suspicious look at Jemmy.

"Oh! nothing, Mrs. Fairfax, but some tender revelations of your husband's. I dare not tell you, or you will be jealous," laughed Arthur.

"Jealous! hardly that," she returned, scornfully.

Jemmy thought his wife was so, and determined to show his fancied power over her.

"Yes, I was just telling them about the circumstance of my being so nearly engaged to—"

"Oh! for Heaven's sake spare me that old story! How foolish you are, Jemmy! Now, come in, will you; you have to write to your father," and she marched the little man off, looking sheepish.

Dinner was quite over, and it was getting damp and cold.

Ethel's guests took refuge in the drawing-room for the evening: by eleven o'clock they dispersed to their rooms, and by midnight the

house was quiet, and not a light shone, but in one apartment, and that was Ethel's.

She sat at the window, which was thrown open; the same window from which she had looked for so many years, for she had never left her old suite of rooms, and could fancy no other in the old Grange.

She had just been reading Lord Egmont's last letter to her; it was but a few lines, but they were very precious. She thought she saw in them proofs, confirmatory proofs, of Caroline's declaration, that he loved his wife. For the fiftieth time almost she had perused them; she now turned to them again:

"MY DEAR ETHEL,

"I shall be at the Grange in a week. I am, and have been, very busy with Caroline's business here, but can ascertain nothing authentic about her unhappy husband. I have reproached myself many times for leaving you so hurriedly that night. I confess that I was cold and hasty. Forgive me! I feel that I

have been a sufficient bar to your happiness, that but for me you might still have been happy with him who owned your first affections. No unworthy thought of you, my wife, could ever cross my mind. I will endeavour to retain your regard, which I know I possess, and which I hold as my dearest, earthly treasure, failing that which perhaps would have made this life too precious! God bless you!

“Your affectionate husband,

“EGMONT.”

How she kissed the autograph, and how long and lovingly she dwelt on the characters, formed by his beloved hand. She had a clue now to his coldness; it was that he thought she could never forget William Dillon.

How could he believe it possible? but she would write to him and tell him all. She felt she had been forgiven her deceit. She would now let him see how proud, how happy she was in calling him husband!

And she had written him a long letter of love

and hope and happiness. It was addressed with the rest of his despatches to Belgrave Square.

How peaceful and happy she was then. The moon lay sleeping in the moon beams; and the old church stood clearly marked out against the clear, pale sky.

The chimes struck twelve. As the last died away, she heard distinctly the sound of a horse's hoofs. She listened intently as they advanced, and were for a moment lost in the windings of the road as they entered a dell. Then again they were heard, and at last darting out from the gloom of the woods, into the bright moonlight, Ethel saw a horseman galloping fast, faster.

Her heart stood still, and then beat rapidly. Without moving she watched the horse coming nearer and nearer. When it reached the gate entering on the broad gravel drive, she saw the rider after dismounting and opening it, remount and gallop wildly forward again, until he reached the hall door, at which he rang loudly and unceasingly.

Some dreadful news, there must be! Ethel did not consider what, but hastily seized the lamp from the table, and hurried down the oaken stairs.

There, at the foot, she met Cresswell, agitated and frightened.

"Hasten, Cresswell, open the door; something must be wrong!"

He undid the bolts and bars, assisted by his mistress with trembling hands, the man without in the meantime urging them to greater speed.

At last the doors were flung open, and the rider, with a letter in one hand, and holding his panting horse by the bridle with the other, was disclosed to their bewildered gaze

"A telegraphic message! I received it at eleven fifteen, and I am here at twelve two. Be good enough to sign this."

And he held out a second paper.

Ethel seized the first and held it to the light, whilst Cresswell begged the man to be patient.

"The message is for Lady Egmont; you had better take it to her at once."

"I am Lady Egmont," returned Ethel, with eyes still fixed on the letter.

She feared to open it; bad as was suspense, now the moment was come she had not the courage to break it.

"I beg your pardon, my lady," rejoined the man in a respectful voice.

"Take your horse round to the stable, and call one of the grooms. Come in the back way and have some refreshment. Go now, I beg," added Cresswell, as the messenger turned slowly from the door.

The single lamp in the dark old hall lighted up only the figures of Ethel and her old servant as they stood with agony and terror on their countenances.

Ethel broke the wafer. Three lines seemed to burn themselves into her brain:—

"My lord has met with an accident on the railway. He is insensible. The doctors beg your ladyship to come without delay.

"Signed, H. WARTON."

It was the valet who had sent this short notice.

Ethel pressed her hand on her beating heart, and almost breathless held out the message to Cresswell.

"Order the carriage without a moment's delay. Bring me the time book, Cresswell."

He turned to the table where it was, and handed it to his mistress, after a vain attempt to turn the leaves.

"I see! There is a train at two o'clock, so now be quick, good Cresswell; call up the coachman, and have everything ready."

And she hastened up the staircase, and entering her room, shut to the door.

She threw herself on her knees, and buried her face in the bed clothes. Her prayer was wild and incoherent, but we need not words to reveal our heart agonies and need of help to the Seer of all hearts and the Friend of all humanity. Wild as was the prayer, it reached the heaven to which it was sent, with all its burden of sorrow and desolation.

She rose somewhat calmer, and then again hastened with her preparations. She took her husband's letter from her bosom, kissed it again and again, and replaced it there.

She closed the window. She thought it was chilly, and she could not look now on the peaceful, happy scene; it seemed to mock her agony.

Simpson knocked at the door, having been roused by Cresswell. She saw her lady's pale, agitated face, so she said nothing, but commenced packing the few necessary articles for the journey.

It was nearing the time for starting, and Ethel, quite ready and impatient to be gone, had one more duty to perform.

She passed along the dark passages, and reached Thomasina's door. There she paused, and tapped once, twice. It seemed so strange that anyone would be sleeping, when her mind was so restless and agonised.

At last Thomasina answered.

"It is only I. I want to speak to you."

And the door opened, and Thomasina appeared in her white dressing gown, looking frightened.

She was not much reassured by Ethel's face, on which the lamp shone with a ghastly light.

"Heavens, Ethel! what is the matter? You look so ill! What can I do for you?"

"No! no! nothing the matter with me. But I have had bad news of my husband, my dear husband! I go to him in half an hour. I have called you to ask you to see my Aunt the first thing in the morning, and in your kind way break it to her. See, here is the message."

Thomasina took the paper, and read the few lines.

"Good God! dear Henry! poor Ethel!" she gasped, and looked at her cousin. "Stay! let me go with you. It is not right you should be alone. I will be ready in ten minutes."

"No, indeed, dear cousin, I think I had better be alone. Besides, I am so anxious about Aunty, and could trust her to you, with your kindness and gentleness (for Thomasina was

very gentle with the old lady, and very considerate). Cresswell and Simpson both come with me, so I have the necessary attendants. I had better be alone with my thoughts, and try and summon courage for this trial. God help me!"

And she passed her hand drearily over her forehead. Her eyes looked glassy; not a tear had yet dimmed them.

So Thomasina promised, and did what she saw would best comfort poor Ethel, and accompanying her to her room, assisted in a quiet, thoughtful way with the last preparations, and persuaded her to take a cup of hot coffee before she started.

She then went to the hall door with her, saw her into the carriage, which stood there in the moonlight, with its noiseless attendants, for the shadow of grief was on the house, and Lord Egmont's domestics, showed their sympathy and real concern, in the silent way in which they went about their duties.

Thomasina kissed her cousin's cold cheek, implored her to write, if only a line, and with a

sense as near relief as it was possible to feel; Ethel left her home in the silent night.

That dreadful night! how often in after years did its recollection prey on her with a nightmare-like pressure! the dull roll of the wheels to the station, the comparative noise and bustle when there, the phantom lights that danced on the line, and shone in the engine as it neared the platform. Then the shrill whistle and the breathless speed at which they rushed forward, passing the slumbering villages nestling in the woods, or over the bleak, bare common, where the moon lit up the patches of gorse and heather, and glittered on a distant group of cottages. The dead monotony of the stations, the shrill whistle, and then again the frantic speed!

Ethel's mind was confused; her past life seemed mist-like, uncertain, faint. The one object now seemed to stand forth with agonised distinctness. For he whom she loved was lying perhaps dead; all she prayed for, cherished in her heart, was that he might live to know her, say he forgave her! only one word, one look! She dared

not admit the idea that he would recover; she had a morbid dread of allowing herself to cherish the hope. It was better to be prepared for the worst, and God would help her! How fervently but incoherently her prayer rose in agony to that throne, during that long and terrible night.

The dawn, the fresh summer's dawn broke in unclouded beauty on the landscape. One by one the hills shone out from the mist, the little hamlets awoke to happy enjoyment, freshness, and the return of light and heat! One by one the cottages opened doors and windows, and the thrifty mother emerging, cast a hasty glance on the train as it rushed by, disturbing for a moment the still half-repose of the village.

Long shadows lay on the fields, and groups of cattle rose and wended their way to the neighbouring brook side. The mill wheels rousing from their temporary cessation of labour began now again to turn and disturb the placid water. The birds, first chirping, then awaking to joyful song, rose in the fresh morning air! These sounds of hope and pleasure fell with a mournful echo on

Ethel's ear, she the desolate and despairing wife, hurrying to a husband's death-bed !

It was broad daylight and no signs now of the sleep from which all nature had arisen.

The hum of a city was to be heard, and the hurrying to and fro of the restless, busy crowd.

In a trance as it were, Ethel entered a hired carriage, and leaving Simpson to bring on her luggage, hastily left the terminus with her old butler on the box.

The comparative calmness of her mind now gave way altogether, her impatience rose to an almost insupportable height ; each street seemed longer than the other, and when at last they stopped opposite the house in Belgrave Square, she was almost frantic with suspense and anxiety. As they drove up, a carriage, a doctor's chariot, made way for them. Thank Heaven for that sign—that he was yet alive.

The shutters of the dining room were shut, and the house looked dull and mournful. The door was half open, as Cresswell rang the bell, and Warton himself appeared. When he saw

who it was who stood at the door, he hurried down the steps to the cab.

"My lord is not worse, my lady; Dr. M. and Dr. D. are with him now again.

Ethel thanked him with a look, for speak she could not. She ascended the stairs, and on the landing by the drawing room paused. Warton came forward and opened the door. It was all dark; the shutters still unclosed.

"No!" faintly said Ethel. "I would rather go up to Lord Egmont."

She went on straight to his dressing-room, there she paused. She heard voices. Warton passed her and opened the door. There were the two doctors, one seated by the table, writing, the other standing by the chimney piece.

Doctor M. knew Lady Egmont; he it was who was writing. At the sound of footsteps he turned and looked distressed as he caught sight of her pale and agitated face. He came to her and took her hand in his, made her sit down, and watched her silently for a moment. She could not speak now! Through the half-open

door she thought she heard a sound of hard breathing!

"This is a great trial for you, Lady Egmont, I grieve to say Lord Egmont is still insensible, but we are not without hope; he is strong and still young, quite young, all in his favour."

"Thank you, thank you! Doctor M. When can I see him, now?"

"Yes! Shortly; wait a moment and recover yourself. Every attention has been paid him, and I shall remain here another hour. Doctor D., you will see those patients for me. Tell them how I am situated. Let me see you again before two, if you can manage it."

He passed Ethel and whispered something to his friend. She caught the words,

"If no change takes place, we must resort to other means."

Doctor D—— bowed silently, and left the room. Doctor M—— turned to Lady Egmont again.

"This has been a severe accident; it is a

miracle Lord Egmont escaped with his life. The carriage in which he was, was shattered," (Ethel shuddered) "and he is not the only one who suffered; one has indeed been killed."

Ethel could have shrieked, but she did not; a vague feeling that she might be heard in the adjoining room restrained her. She hid her eyes for a moment.

"I think I will go into the—the room."

"No; I beg your ladyship to wait a few moments yet. You must be prepared to see a great change in your husband; it may shock you, and tired and hurried as you are, I think you had better remain here, or in another room for a while. Take a little rest and refreshment!"

(Rest! whilst he was lying there, dying! as if it were possible!)

"Doctor M——, I am not equal to the suspense. I would rather know the worst at once. I can do him no harm."

The Doctor shook his head sadly.

"No, indeed; he will not know you. By this evening I hope, I trust he may be conscious; if not," and he paused.

"And if not," said Ethel, in a hoarse voice, "if not, he will die!"

"I shall be very, very anxious, I confess," he tried to modify it, but Ethel could see that he would then give no hope.

No hope! How dreary were the words, how they fell on her, as she whispered them to herself, like a death knell! How was it that she had till then believed she was prepared for the worst? She was not, none of us are; in the worst of our trials, in the midst of unutterable woe, a still small voice, so subdued, so soft, we cannot hear it, is telling us all is not lost, is with its unconscious influence, buoying up our fainting hearts!

We watch by the sick couch of our beloved ones, believing we are content to give them up, that we are ready prepared for the final separation. Yet how the faintest rally, the least favourable change calls forth into active, breathing

life, the latent spirit of hope, that hope which we thought had left us for ever, and which we now see had supported us through many an anxious hour, through many a saddening scene!

It is sent us by the Comforter, who knows how to temper the wind to the shorn lamb, and although bitter may be the reaction, when it at last fails us, before the stern reality of death, let us cherish it as God's gift to the afflicted and long-suffering.

And Ethel rose, and with pale and fixed features, she passed Doctor M——, as he vainly attempted to stop her, and entered her husband's room, and drew near to his dying couch!

CHAPTER XII.

THE lazy morning breeze flapped to and fro with a monotonous sound the window blinds, which drawn down, cast a subdued light on the sick room.

The curtains of the bed were stretched back as if to court every breath of air for the sufferer, who, lay there, gasping almost, as it seemed to the awed ears of Ethel. She advanced by degrees to the bedside, her hand pressed tightly on her heart; she hardly dared to look, and not until she stood close to her husband did she realise his form.

Ah! it was hard to recognize in those rigid and heavy features the countenance she had ever

seen beaming with life and intelligence, to see that heavy brow, that fixed mouth, and those eyes half open and dimmed.

A wet handkerchief was about his forehead, and clung to the head it was to cool. The hands lay on each side motionless, and clenched, and the breathing rose and fell, heavily on the ear.

Good Heavens! that she should be there to see him thus, that for the first time he should appear thus unconscious of her presence, unmindful of her voice; living, breathing, yet dead to all around!

Some time she stood there, with dilated eyes, but motionless. She at last put her hand forward, but nervously, and touched the handkerchief about his head. It seemed to her dry now, and she hastily looked round, saw a jug of iced water near, plunged it in, and replaced it.

This little act recalled her somehow to herself; it gave her a something tangible by which to grasp, and realise the feeling more completely that he was there, dying, and she, his wife,

must, so long as he lingered, be by him, with him, to administer what slight relief it was now given her to bestow.

In an instant, then, the rapid feverish journey, the bewildered excitement was forgotten; she became calm, resolved, and when the doctor entered to see his patient again, he found her seated at the head, with a deadly pale, but composed face, ready to obey his directions and carry out his treatment.

He drew near, placed his hand on the forehead, and lifting an eyelid, looked attentively at the immoveable pupil.

Ethel shrank. That dead looking, unconscious eye! how fearful to her, on whom it had beamed so often in love and pity!

The doctor glanced at her, and shook his head.

"No improvement as yet, I grieve. I think," after a pause, "you had better let me engage a regular nurse for his lordship, one accustomed to such cases. It will relieve you, Lady Egmont, and—"

"Pardon me," interrupted Ethel, in a low voice, "I had rather not. So long as it please God to give me power, I do not leave his side. Indeed a stranger would overpower, not assist me. I shall remain with him; tell me what I can do, I will attend faithfully."

He saw her determination; he ceased to urge. He knew from sad experience of such scenes that the only consolation left to the mourners is to watch alone by the bedside of the departing one; that each moment passed away from them is fraught with tenfold bitterness and sorrow. So he gave some simple directions; skill could avail but little. All depended on the strength of the constitution and the extent of the injury to the brain. The constant application of cold lotions to the head was pretty nearly all that could be done by her, and the kind and pitying medical man took his leave with a sad heart for the young and despairing wife left alone with her dying husband.

Poor Ethel! it was indeed alone she felt now.

Much as she had dwelt on his coldness to her, his waning love, still he was her husband, was with her, and hope could never quite desert her. Now he was there, indeed, but how soon would he be gone for ever to her in this world? Back flew her mind over her short life. How all former troubles and sorrows seemed as shadows before the black and dreadful cloud that had now settled on her?

She hardly dared to think. She determined to devote herself now to the mechanical duties of a nurse. She again applied wet bandages, and felt the hot wrist. All unconscious as he lay there, she kissed the pale, pale cheek once—twice, and then reseated herself by his pillow, to watch and wait—and wait. Hard task!

The valet tapped gently at the door. She went to it.

“My lady, I beg your pardon,” he whispered. “Mrs. Scott is come from Egmont, and is below.”

“Mrs. Scott! tell her to come here quickly,”

with a sensation of relief, hurriedly whispered Ethel.

In a few minutes the door of the dressing room softly opened, and the old woman entered. She looked nervous and pale, and as she advanced, Ethel hastened to her, and grasped her hand, as she sank on a chair, with tears now raining fast down her cheeks.

"Do not, do not, dear Mrs. Scott. You will unnerve me! We have so much before us. Here, take this glass of water. There, you are better now. Do not sob so! Look at me; I have not shed a tear since the news came."

And so it was. Her eyes were bright and dazzling almost, though her cheeks were deadly white.

"Oh, my lady, it is so dreadful! but tell me how he is, my dear?"

"Not worse! not worse! that is all. But oh! Scott, he is so changed! God help me!—oh, God help me!"

And her hands were cast despairingly to Heaven.

By degrees poor old Mrs. Scott became more composed, and taking off her bonnet and shawl, and smoothing her hair as if she were entering the presence of her master as he was, not, alas! as he is, she made for the sick room.

Ethel let her enter alone, but in few moments restless impatience brought her again to the bedside, and there she saw poor Scott, whose tears had again welled forth at the sad sight, standing helpless and bowed down, as it were, with grief and horror.

"Does he look so very bad, Scott?" hoarsely whispered Ethel.

"Not so very bad, but oh! my lady, so like his dear mother as last I saw her."

A thrill of fear passed over Ethel's frame. He, then, was dying! The same look was stealing over his features as over his mother's when on the threshold of eternity.

But Mrs. Scott had come there not to weep but to help. She brought with her, in addition to her helpful, thoughtful ways, a stock of real genuine love for the sufferer, and tender pity for

the young wife. She had long grieved in silence over the coolness and estrangement she had seen growing up between her master and his wife. But with the keen observation of one who really is deeply interested, she detected that no want of love existed; it might be temper. She could not say, but she trusted and she hoped and she believed it would all be right one day.

Now she busied herself noiselessly about the room, placing everything right, and removing bottles and basins out of sight, whilst Ethel, with sad eyes ever dwelling on the beloved features, sat motionless by the pillow.

All that day passed away in a dream; the hot sunshine, the cooling evening, and the deepening twilight. The blinds were drawn up, and all the air was admitted to the couch, where still unchanged and breathing heavily, lay what was Lord Egmont, the beloved of many, the admired statesman, the respected friend and counsellor, the good man, whose benevolence had removed many a thorn from the path of his fellow creatures.

It was getting dark, and the lamps shone fitfully from the pavements. A dead silence prevailed. Mrs. Scott had gone away for a time. Ethel sat alone with the insensible sufferer, one of her hands clasping the rigid palm which lay helplessly there.

In those silent hours, when face to face with death in the form most appalling to her, as grasping the beloved and precious life she valued above all in this world, her mind wandered again and again over her brief existence. How she grieved over the one deceit, fraught with such overwhelming bitterness! How much happiness might have been hers, but for this one act! How might she have comforted and helped him who now lay there helpless, and passing away to regions where her influence, her fond aspirations could never reach him!

That silent room was peopled with phantoms of bitter memories, and her heart sank as she thought of opportunities of happiness, heedlessly passed by and neglected, until lost for ever!

A slight restlessness in the patient awoke her

reverie. She rose and brought the lamp nearer the bed, and bent anxiously down; but no life was in the half-closed eye.

Nothing but a nervous twitching of the mouth and the hands. She replaced the cooling bandages, and after a time he became quiet again, and she stole from the room to speak to Mrs. Scott.

The old woman was dozing on the large chair.

Ethel roused her. She had just heard the Doctor's carriage, and went down the stairs to meet him. There on the marble slab lay a heap of letters; amongst them hers to her husband, the one she had written to him last. Alas! it was still sealed. He would then die, and not know after all how deeply he was beloved!

This seemed all that was wanting to complete her misery.

But it was no time to dwell on her sorrows. The doctor was there; he would be able to tell her now, if all hope was over.

Tremblingly she held out her hand, and falteringly she followed his steps, as he entered the room, and took his place once again by the bed-side.

His hand was on the pulse; he started and called for the lamp. He placed it close, close to the eye, half closed and even dimmer than it was ; a cold, grey film seemed to have gathered over it.

"There is no change for the better! I fear, for the worse."

Not a word from Ethel. She merely clung to the bed-side as if for support.

"I can do nothing more! is there no one who could be with you, Lady Egmont?"

And he looked kindly on the poor wife.

"You think, then, that all is over; I must not hope?" she whispered in a strange low voice.

"No, not all hope gone, but there is a change for the worse, the pulse is much weaker. I can do nothing more; but Dr. D—— will be here soon. Ah! I hear his carriage. Kindly remain in the dressing room, and send him in here."

Ethel obeyed without a word, and soon the door was closed and the two medical men in close consultation.

Ethel and Scott hardly dared breathe, and the few moments seemed endless until they reappeared. Eagerly were their faces scanned. No hope there! Sadness dwelt on both.

"A few hours must decide, Lady Egmont. At present, I must as a duty say, that my friend and I have little hope! This long insensibility and failing vitality! Still, there is his natural strength of constitution, it may enable him to rally; but do not be sanguine, my dear Lady Egmont, and let me beg of you to send for Colonel Thelluson or your aunt?"

"No, no! not her, my poor aunt. Stay dear Doctor M——, here is Colonel Thelluson's address." She hurriedly wrote it down. "Will you send him a line? I hardly think I could write," and she put her hand drearily to her forehead.

"I will write; I would stay here, but I have many urgent cases to night, and I can do nothing!

Good night; God bless you! I shall be here early to-morrow."

They had left the room. Poor Ethel sank by the table, and buried her face in her hands. Bitter sighs every now and then burst forth from her weary heart.

Scott's eyes rained tears. She tried in a broken voice to say some words of comfort in her plain, homely language, and with the familiarity which real sympathy renders natural and welcome, she laid her hand on her lady's shoulder as still she spoke of hope, of life.

Ethel listened and thanked her old friend with a look, but there were no tears in those bright and wild eyes.

The night wore on. Ethel again watching ceaselessly. Not a moment's rest or sleep.

Scott remained in the dressing room, and the small, bed-room clock chimed the passing hours. The pulse of time beat unceasingly on Ethel's ear with intense distinctness.

And so life had passed for her! Vain the gifts of fortune, youth, health, beauty, if this

was to be the end; that after all so freely lavished on her, she should have nothing left but one absorbing, bitter memory!

The early morning dawned slowly. Slowly it stole in at the still open windows, by degrees lighting up with spectral effect the furniture of the room, the bed and its hanging folds of white, and last of all the one beloved face that lay on the pillow, paler, more rigid even than it was by the lamplight. Something in the face struck the wife—an increased pallor, a relaxation of the muscles about the mouth and eyes. She felt the pulse, eagerly, it was faint, oh, so faint!

Then he was going! he, the beloved of her heart! she would call no one! none but she alone should receive his parting sigh. Jealously she crept to the door opening to the dressing-room. There was Scott dozing. She closed it and once more knelt by his side.

The dear face was beginning to look so much more calm now. The first ray of that blessed and eternal peace, she thought, was now stealing over it! he was beginning to look like himself. The

same sweet, sweet look of benevolence and love around the mouth; his pulse was, she thought, still weaker—weaker—and he was dying now, hastening to rest and happiness, leaving a world of disappointment and sorrow, soon to be united with that mother, who alone on earth had loved him, well and unselfishly. Long Ethel looked, and more than once she kissed the pale cheek. Almost a smile broke over the face; it reminded her dimly of the many she had seen beaming on his countenance when in life and health.

The floods of grief, so long pent up, were then let loose! she fell on her knees and buried her head beside the lifeless hand, and the tears fell in floods and moistened the bed clothes, as her face was hidden there.

“My husband! my beloved; if only I could go too. Oh! God in his mercy take me. I cannot live without him, my husband, oh! my husband!”

How bitter was the despairing cry, how it echoed in the lonely room; with the cold dawn faintly stealing in it aroused Mrs. Scott. She crept

silently into the room. There she saw the pale, pale face of her lord, there his wife's prostrate figure. She knew that nothing could be done; it would be some comfort to Ethel that she had been alone with her husband in his dying hours, so she returned, and rocking herself to and fro and recalling the long years of her servitude, the recollection of her departed mistress, and dwelling on the goodness of her dying young master, she waited and waited, and wept silent tears.

Still that wailing cry in the sick room, that earnest petition not to be left in this weary world alone; that cry for pardon, that earnest avowal of deep, true love!

Poor Ethel! she was indeed realising those true, but awful words, that without much tribulation, we cannot enter the kingdom of Heaven!

She had exhausted herself with her sobs, her prayers, and now she rested, whilst the relieving tears fell copiously from her eyes; her long hair, escaped from the comb, was hanging down her back, and her arms, thin and white, were flung across the bed.

A feeling of bewilderment shot across her mind. She felt a hand laid gently on her head, then a voice, trembling and weak :

" My Ethel ! "

Good God ! could it be ?

She gently lifted her face, hardly daring to look.

There were those dear eyes, looking down on her with unutterable love and tenderness.

• She dared not speak a word ; her tongue seemed paralyzed ; she could only look with distended gaze on the beloved face, on which the struggling daylight was playing, and revealing it in all its pallor, and its great change !

" My Ethel ! " she again heard, and she saw the lips move, as they gave forth the faint sound.

Yes, he was sensible, could see her, speak to her ! Such a well of happiness sprung up in her breast. It was suffocating ; too great to bear !

" My husband ! my beloved ! do you know me then ? "

"Do I? Oh! my Ethel, such happiness! You do love me, then. I thank Thee, oh! my God! I thank Thee!"

Two large tears gathered in those brightening eyes, and rolled down over the thin cheeks.

"Not a word now," whispered Ethel; "as you love me, not a word. All depends on quiet, and no agitation. For my sake, be composed!"

For his face was agitated, and his hands shaking with emotion.

"My Ethel! one word. I will be so quiet. Do not grieve over me, if—if this has brought me to the happy, blessed knowledge that I possess your love!"

"You do, you do, dearest husband! God forgive me for having caused such misery, as I have done. Rest now. For my sake, leave me not! Let us pray that God will preserve you to me, for, oh! to part with you now I could not."

And she prayed long and earnestly, and her husband, with closed eyes, and clasped hands in hers, prayed with her.

He stretched out his arms to her, weakly, feebly. She took his head, and rested it up on her faithful heart. She kissed his pale cheek, and then gently laying him on his pillow, she drew the curtains, and with the relaxing, moistening hand in hers, with a heart full of gratitude that at least he would not die now without having known and blessed her, she took a low seat by his side, and her head leant beside his on the same pillow ! There was peace and happiness in those two hearts, now united for ever ; so long estranged.

As the sun rose, its rays fell through the curtains on the two faces ; both so pale, but so peaceful, and both now wrapt in a calm and refreshing sleep.

Scott, good old soul ! stole in and watched them. She was too much acquainted with illness not to note gratefully that a great and improved change had come over the sufferer. She marked his happy smile, his regular and gentle breathing, and saw how peacefully he slept.

She withdrew to her room, and knelt in gratitude to the Giver of all Good. Then she aroused the valet, and cautioned him against the least noise in the house. Their dear master was sleeping now; not the heavy sleep of insensibility, but one of refreshment and invigoration. God be thanked for this!

In due time the doctors had arrived. Scott motioned them into the sick room. Ethel was awake then, watching the patient, who still slept on. A new born happiness and joy shone out of her pale face and tear-stained eye-lids; she raised her fingers to her lips. Doctor M——— looked at Lord Egmont, and gently, touched his wrist.

"Thank God!" he whispered, as he looked at Ethel. "Let him sleep on, and he is safe!"

Ethel grasped his hand for a moment. She could say nothing; she only shook her head as he begged her in a low voice to take some rest now. There was nothing to do; sleep was the healing medicine; she might safely leave him. But no, she would remain on the sofa.

The doctors withdrew, and for hours still Lord Egmont slept. When he awoke it was with a bewildered feeling of happiness. For a moment he trembled that it was unreal, but the sight of his Ethel, who, with anxious, loving eyes, was by his side, reassured him. He knew now that that happiness, for which he had so longed, was his. Her truthful, ingenuous countenance plainly spoke her deep love and tenderness for her husband.

For days he lay there weak as a child; but happiness is a grand invigorator, and this, more than all, restored him speedily. How he used to watch his beautiful wife as she moved about his room, or sat by his side for long, long hours! In after life he used to say that that period of rest and bliss was one of his most beloved recollections, and he used to dwell on it with a happy smile, and deep gratitude at his heart.

Colonel Thelluson arrived, but only to find his nephew convalescent, so he remained but a very short time, and left the Egmonts again alone. Auntie received daily bulletins of her much-

loved nephew, and used to delight in reading out Ethel's happy, cheerful letters.

"My darling," began Lord Egmont one day, "I cannot think how it was we misunderstood each other so long. Could you not have seen that though I was so disappointed, I still loved you so deeply, so fondly?"

"Dearest Henry! do not let us talk of it now. Sufficient that it is all past and gone. At times I feel as if I can never forgive myself for my deception towards you. I ought to have told you, good, generous as you were, of—of—William Dillon; but my pride prevented me for so long, and then when you discovered all, that pride again intruded, and then (shall I own my folly?) I believed that in seeing Caroline you began to regret the past, and think with grief over the adverse fates which had separated you both."

"Is it possible?" returned her husband, as he put his hand on her head, and looked into her blushing sweet face. "No, no; could I ever regret Caroline when I call you wife?"

And long, long explanations ensued. In the happiness of the present, complete, full as was their cup, the miserable past was forgotten, and they set forth on their married life once more, with confidence, full love, and trust in each other. Hand in hand now, to face the troubles and the trials, supported by the blessed consciousness that not alone had they to encounter the fiery ordeal.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE summer sun is shining brightly on the Grange lawn early, and the shadows of the beautiful old beech trees are lying peacefully on the smooth grass.

The flower beds are brilliant with their summer tenants, and the birds are uplifting their joyful chorus from every shrub.

The windows of the morning room are opened to the ground, and at the moment of which we speak, whilst yet the dew is sparkling on the sward, Ethel appeared, and looked over the garden towards the sea, on which her eye lingered with fond, never-wearying delight.

Two years have passed since we last saw our

heroine; two years of mingled joy and sorrow, over which, however, happiness and deep content had predominated.

In those two years Auntie had departed to her home of rest and happiness, her last look resting on her child, who was turning for comfort and support to her husband!

How Auntie had revelled in the bright picture of domestic bliss now ever before her. She wondered she had been so blind as not to see that something had been amiss between Lord Egmont and his wife; the contrast now was so great.

When propped up by cushions in an invalid carriage, Ethel had brought her husband to her old home after his illness; it was a never-ceasing interest to the old lady to watch them, to see how Ethel's every thought and hope were centred in the large easy chair, which she seldom left, and in which her husband reposed, with fond eye ever following her footsteps, and in her absence, however short, watching the door or windows by which she would reappear. Auntie used to de

clare to Dr Malvern, that it was like the sunflower, turning with unerring instinct towards the rays of that orb on which it existed, and from which it drew its strength and well-being.

For a long time Lord Egmont remained an invalid, but when the old Aunt drew her last breath, he was well and about again, and unwearied and attentive he proved in her last illness.

Not a wish ungratified had she on her death-bed. She looked back with complacency on her pilgrimage in life, not without its trials. She looked now before her with joy and trust, such joy and trust as turn the last earthly couch into a throne of triumph and exceeding bliss!

And whilst Ethel wept beside her departing relative, her heart still rose in gratitude to Him who was thus receiving the spirit of her second mother, the dear guardian of her youth.

And so she died, and a year has now passed since her funeral had stolen slowly down the avenue, to the old church on the hill, with the summer sun raining down brilliant rays, which

played with the leaves on the beech trees, and cast flickering lights on the black pall and the procession of mourners. The bell had tolled mournfully, and borne by the breeze, echoed amongst the scenes where she, for whom it pealed, had passed so many years of her life; it passed into the room where, by the window, thrown open, stood Ethel, who, with bursts of agonised weeping, followed with dimmed eyes the fast disappearing procession. The bell is hushed, and those exquisitely beautiful comforting words are being spoken by the good old Doctor, though in trembling tones. Those words, which assure us our treasure is not here within that dark receptacle, but up, up above—far above, in the realms of joy and purity! Who can say how many hearts the Friend of all mankind may have filled with comfort and exceeding gratitude by those all powerful words; and how many mourners may have then gazed with far different feelings on the coffin, now being fast concealed from human sight.

A few months later still, and the bells were

again pealing, but this time merrily, for an heir was born to Egmont and the broad lands of the Grange, and joy was felt and expressed by one and all on both estates; not so much that a son had at last arrived, as that the beloved lady was safe, and the domestic happiness of herself and her husband thus fully crowned.

Ethel was now again at the Grange; had only just arrived, and she was enjoying the peaceful scene after the bustle and somewhat noisy welcome of themselves and boy at his mother's home.

She stood there by the window, and if a countenance could express happiness and full content, hers might indeed be said to do so. Nine o'clock struck from the old church and repeated by the Grange clock; and punctually to the moment old Cresswell appeared with the hissing urn. Ethel turned to the table, addressing a few kind words to the old man, and his eye seemed to watch with delight the beautiful, happy face of his mistress.

"Is the post yet in, Cresswell?"

"Not yet, my Lady; it is half-an-hour later to-day than usual."

"Perhaps the postman is getting old, and walks not so quickly as he did. We must see about getting him a pony; he is too old now to travel on foot the distance, and I suppose it would break his heart not to carry the post as before?"

"Indeed, yes, my Lady; for forty-four years he has walked that road twice a day, and I know he would miss the work."

"We will see about it then, Cresswell; let me see the coachman after breakfast, and I will speak about his finding a pony for poor old Preston."

"God bless your Ladyship! I will."

And Cresswell disappeared.

In a few minutes Lord Egmont entered.

He is a good deal greyer than when we last saw him, and he looks paler even, and not quite so vigorous or youthful; but if the hair had receded from his temples it only revealed more strikingly the noble forehead, and if he was more pallid, yet nothing could detract from the beauty and high tone of his countenance.

"The post not yet come, my darling?"

"No; I have seen Cresswell—it is much later. But, dearest, are you anxious for it?"

"Somewhat, I confess, Ethel," with a serious smile; "don't ask me why, wife mine, for if you do I must tell, and that I do not want to do just yet."

"Nothing to make you anxious; assure me of that," replied Ethel.

"No! no! not anxious exactly. Let us have breakfast now, love, and by the time it is over we shall have these important dispatches."

Lord Egmont paused many times to look from the window and admire the undulating ground and distant sea; and when the parents perceived their little son paraded on the sunny gravel by his attendant nurses, the prospect then was doubtless perfect.

At last Cresswell re-entered with the large leathern bag with its bright lock. He deposited a heap of letters by his Lord's plate, and a goodly budget beside Ethel's. She glanced one moment at her husband as he opened one or two,

but no expression beyond the ordinary one disturbed his features, so she turned to her own correspondence.

"Such a happy letter from Caroline, dear Henry," after a pause: "she is safe and well at Melbourne, has met Alfred, and nothing can be more promising than their prospects."

"Thank God! dear wife!" returned Lord Egmont. "I trust they may now prosper, for they have had a severe probation. You must read me the letter," and he put aside his, and listened as his wife read through the voluminous dispatch. It took quite half-an-hour, and then Lord Egmont begged Ethel to write a note to the dear old Doctor, begging to see him in the course of the morning.

"And now, darling, come with me to the library, I want your advice; I have something to consult you about."

Ethel followed him into the cool, large room, and stood by his writing table as he took a seat by it.

"You remember, Ethel, I was undertaking a foreign mission at the time of my accident—"

"Which accident prevented your going: Yes, I remember," returned she anxiously.

"Well! I have been expecting some summons since the time when I may have been considered to be quite recovered, and to day I have had it."

"Not to go abroad, Henry. Not to go abroad! Do not say so."

"No! not abroad, darling, and this is what I wish to consult you on. The Government is being formed, and I have had a most pressing and flattering offer of making one of the ministry. It opens a career of usefulness and activity, such as any man may be proud and thankful to fill, but then it must materially affect our present plan of life; interfere with our domestic happiness, inasmuch as it will take me constantly from you, my Ethel, and instead of happy, peaceful days in your society, I must mingle with the anxious, busy crowd, and perhaps only return to my home when my energies are exhausted,

and my society likely to be anything but enlivening! But, Ethel, I have drawn here the dark side of the picture! you can imagine the brighter, my beloved, I know!"

Ethel at this moment looked far from being able to verify his assertion. She was thinking, half aghast at the prospect of being so robbed of her husband's society, which never could weary or pall on her! So truly did she rest her enjoyment and happiness in life on his beloved companionship! She thought with regret on the many, many hours, days, perhaps weeks she should have to relinquish his company, of the many pursuits they had followed together, half, if not the whole, of the charms of which she should now lose! She tried to be unselfish, to argue with herself that he had other claims besides hers on his time and talents.

She was too truthful to say or look what she did not feel.

"Dearest husband! I cannot argue or reflect calmly on that which will alter the whole course of my present most happy life; so let me have

time. I think I see, and know, which way you pronounce right in your mind. So let me have a little while, and I hope the result may be such as you would approve. But, alas! I fear I am very weak."

"But are you not ambitious for your husband, Ethel?" and he drew her to his side.

"Ambitious! no! Nothing could make you nobler or better in my sight, you know, Henry; but I will leave you now."

And she bent down and kissed him; with his loving eyes following her, she left the room.

In another hour Dr. Malvern had been ushered into the library, and was in deep consultation with Lord Egmont.

"So you see, my dear Doctor," said Lord Egmont, "so you see this plan involves much discomfort to us both; but it is a query if I have a right to refuse such services as Government flatter me by saying would be useful. I fear Ethel may not like it, although in the end her excellent sense of what is right and good will help to reconcile her to it; but at the same

time, I owe her so much, for the happiness she has brought into my lonely life, that I do not, cannot bring myself to regard with favour any plan which may prove distasteful to her."

"I see all your difficulties, my Lord, clearly. What rises in my mind now is whether your present career of usefulness (comparatively obscure as it may be to that which is offered to you, but the duties of which you so faithfully discharge, and on which you expend your energies so successfully) is one to be relinquished. I do not mean to flatter; you know it is not for me to do so to you, my friend, but it requires deep thought and consideration, whether in giving up the work before you, here, in your private capacity, you are not forsaking that which God has more especially pointed out for you."

"I have thought of this also; but then, again, the office offered to me is one I feel sure I am suited for. I know I have influence with a certain party, and my views may be carried out with certain benefits in some points, involving the welfare and happiness of many. I know,

doctor, you will not think me vain when I say so. My feelings are all for pursuing my present happy, peaceful life, and God knows I have no personal ambition, no wish to do otherwise than be permitted to work for Him who has been so gracious, so bountiful to me; but here comes Ethel; we shall hear what she says."

"Ah! dear Doctor Malvern here! Well, we shall have a third and valuable addition to our conclave."

She advanced to the table, pale, but calm, and stood again by her husband, after shaking hands kindly with her old friend.

"It is very good of you, dearest, to ask me my wishes. I have just arrived at this point. I know what is most pleasant, but I know, too, what is most right, but, alas! I want help to bring my wishes to this last. You cannot tell, dear doctor, what a change it will be to me to lose Lord Egmont from the happiness of our life, as it is at present, and only to catch glimpses of him, as it were, as he hurries on in the current of a public career."

"I can believe it, dear child, but should it be destined to be so, you will have much more to occupy you. Many of the pursuits you engage in together for the welfare of those around you, must be wholly your occupation and care then, and lightening him of these, you will give him opportunities of applying superior talents and energies to a larger sphere of action."

"Well, I half hoped you would have been for his remaining as before, Doctor Malvern. But how weak I am, and how unworthy of you, my husband."

"Not unworthy, my Ethel! Oh! not unworthy, Heavens knows!" and her husband clasped her hand. "It depends all on you; if you so dislike the project, I cannot make up my mind to undertake it, as I could not engage in it heartily, if I saw you suffered."

"I have quite made up my mind now, Henry; something tells me I have no right to place my selfish happiness in the way of a useful and brilliant path opening to you. No, let us

travel on together in life, helping each other, whilst doing our duty as God shows it us. You with your goodness, your powers of mind, and your energy are fit to engage in this life before you. You shall not be hindered by a foolish, fond wife. Whilst you work abroad for the good of many (who can tell how many) I will labour at home, and may God bless us both, and bless our endeavours!"

"Amen!" said Doctor Malvern, as he looked with love and reverence at the husband and wife, who hand in hand sat there opposite to him, freely giving up certain happiness and content, for a life which must separate them widely, but which duty and principle alike urged and sanctioned.

And so it was settled, and the letter of acceptance written and dispatched, and the Doctor departed, giving his fond blessing to Ethel and Egmont.

The day was drawing to a close, this day of anxiety and discussion, and with happy but

serious countenances, Lord Egmont stood with his wife on the yellow sands beneath the cliffs, which led to the Grange.

The sun was fast sinking in summer glory, the heavens lit up with the grandeur of his departure. The sea resplendent with the gorgeous rose tints which shot their farewell over the blue vault. Not a ripple on the waters; all calm and majestic. Small boats were rowing in from the larger vessels, and the song of the boatmen was wafted over the waters in soft cadence.

How long they stood there, that happy husband and wife, they knew not. Sufficient that they were side by side, drinking in with enjoyment, redoubled by being experienced together, the beauty of the grand panorama, the sinking sun, the brilliant sky!

Paler it grew, and paler still, and the modest moon in her turn shone timidly over the expanse of water. The boats neared the shore, were deserted by their crew, and left to repose. The fishermen sought their rocky huts, and shut to the doors; and no sound but the gentle

summer splash of the tiny waves, and the feeling of the deep, deep repose of that vast ocean, sleeping beneath the moonbeams.

"And so, my Ethel, all is rest at last, to those who do well, though the day may be hot and weary, though the toil great, a brilliant hope crowns its close, and rest, blessed rest, at last. May God grant us such power and will to do his work, and then at the close such peace as we feel now, my beloved!"

And Ethel looked up in her husband's face, as she clung to his side, and inwardly repeated his prayer.

Their faces were set to do the work before them, and if deep love to their Maker, and from thence to their fellow creatures can aid them, their mission will indeed be done, and their end peace!

* * * *

And Lord Egmont realised to the full the most sanguine expectations of his abilities and

influence. In the cause of philanthropy he was ever foremost, bearing down before his indomitable will, and with his rare powers of eloquence and persuasion, all the bitter opponents of the cause he ever held dearest. Finding, after the worries, the anxieties of public life, ever a gentle comforter and help in his home. Never returning to it without blessing its presiding genius, and departing without lingering thoughts of his wife and of his children, now growing up and flourishing around him. Truly his lot was blessed!

Ethel, in her drawing-room in Belgrave Square, was one morning invaded by Jemmy and his wife. The former now actually in parliament sitting for his county, and voting regularly, but thinking and talking much less politics than his strong-minded Thomasina.

"Ethel!" burst out this lady, "I want so much an order to the House of Lords for this evening. You can get me one, I hope."

"Why, really it is difficult, I believe. I asked Henry to-day before he left, and he said

he had disposed of all his. But who is it for?"

"Why, for no less a person than William Dillon! We met him in the Square just now; he has leave of absence from his post for some months, and he is all anxiety to hear Lord Egmont to night on that all-absorbing and interesting subject so much affecting his colony. I told him I would ask you. He is going round to his club, and will call here for an answer, and to see you, so you *must* manage it, Ethel."

"Fancy William being in England. I am very glad of this," returned Ethel. "No wonder he wants to hear Henry to-night."

"Heavens! Lady Egmont," said Jemmy, "how proud you must be of your husband. I hear there will be a regular crush to hear him. What a career his will be! Are you not proud?"

"Yes, proud and happy he is so useful. Not proud in a less exalted sense, I hope. Now tell me if your family are in town?"

"Yes. Sir Henry has brought Mary up for

a last trial; but she is growing very peaky looking, and very crabbed, isn't she, Thomasina?"

"Yes, I fear so. Since her sister's marriage she has been disgusted at being left alone at home. But here are the children!"

And the door opened, and three blooming bairns rushed in to kiss mama before they took their siesta. As one and another were scrambling about, the servant announced Mr. Dillon.

Ethel rose colouring to receive him. With unfeigned pleasure she shook his hand, and welcomed him home. For a minute or more he looked at her with eyes that scanned at the same time her beautiful features and looked back briefly and sadly at the past. But the bitterness of his trial was over now. He, too, had high motives before him for exertion, and nobly had he overcome his tendency to despondency and inertness. He had never married, but found ample occupation in the duties of his post, and the realisation of his many projects for good.

"And are all these yours, Ethel?"

"Yes, all," said the proud mother.

"And this little damsel is Ethel, of course, for it is the image of mama."

And he lifted the fairy, and gazing at her blue eyes, kissed her and set her down again.

"Now go, my darlings. Nurse is waiting."

She looked at them fondly as they stole away, and then turned to her guests.

"I am very sorry, William, but I fear we have not one order to give you for to-night. What can I do?"

"I have just had one given me. I am so anxious to hear Lord Egmont to-night. You can't tell what we think of him in our colony, or how we look to him and him alone to redress the grievances of the natives. Not one of them with ordinary intelligence but knows his name, and blesses it too in their fashion."

Ethel looked pleased and happy. They all sat chatting until luncheon time, and that meal over, they separated until the evening.

There was a low buzz of voices in that gorgeous

house that night as Lord Egmont rose to address it.

That noble form, that pale and intellectual brow, bespoke attention at once. Peers and commoners settled themselves to hear with clearness and advantage the tones ever uplifted in the cause of goodness and charity. A slight pause, and a pin might be heard to fall. Many sat forward with hands behind their ears, and eyes intently fixed on the orator, as he stood there, pale and calm, awaiting the close of the temporary disturbance.

And now clear and ringing came forth the words, expressing the high-toned thoughts, the deep, soul-stirring convictions of that mind, bent solely on the good of his fellow creatures. Strongly, but with moderation, he condemned the policy of those who seek to aggrandise and enrich a country at the expense of a weak, a fallen race. Emphatically he urged the redress of their wrongs, appealing to a higher authority than any which this world can offer, for a confirmation of his words. Long he went on, the

minutes creeping into hours. Unspent, even increasing in energy as he proceeded, and enlarging on the question, carrying his audience along unresistingly, as in a charmed bark bearing them on the swift current of his thoughts. Tears rose in the eyes of many, as in the pathetic and beautiful language in which he so well knew how to clothe his meaning, he drew a picture of the woes and sufferings of those for whom he pleaded. His last appeal was not to the country, not to the senators, as there they sat deciding on this great question, but to Christians, the children of God, here only to work out His all-merciful intention and dispensations, not blindly and interestedly to pursue their own short-lived prosperity.

This was the crowning feature of the address. It showed in pure and everlasting characters the Christian man, whose first and last thought has the same source and conclusion.

He sat down paler still, and drew his hand over his eyes.

A breathless silence for a moment, and then

applause long and loud, and reiterated again and again.

The statesman's eye sought the spot where one figure above all had been present to his eye: but it was now hidden behind a group who seemed to be crowding around in congratulation.

A triumphant majority was the result of the debate, and innumerable were the hands offered to Lord Egmont by his party and others, as he made his way to the door of the house. He was accompanied there by some of the enthusiastic admirers, who watched him into a quiet brougham which stood near, and into which he sprang, waving his hand to his friends.

The horse bounded forth from the bright lights of the doorway, and the successful statesman turned to his wife, who, in the corner of the carriage, remained speechless with emotion.

"Was it well? Was it right, my beloved?"

"Well! right! Oh, Henry, what happiness for me. I shall never deserve—to be your wife!"

"My Ethel! my help! my comforter! Wel-

come as may be the applause of to-night, it is nothing, nothing to me, compared to one word from you; one word of praise and approval. Next to God's blessing, it is all I wish and pray for!"

THE END.







